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and over again the four or five anecdotes which went to make up his whole repertory of fun and gaiety, but with feeble effect on the risible faculties of others. He was in the habit of praising with ecstasy the works of some entirely unknown author, I forget whom; he stammered, called his dog Astronomer, although I never noticed that the animal was much interested in the study of the stars; he said *hwever* for *however*, and had introduced into his house French cookery with deplorable success, the whole secret of which consisted, as his cook informed me, in changing completely the natural taste of every dish. Accordingly, his meat tasted of fish, his fish of mushrooms, and his maccaroni smacked of gunpowder. No carrot or turnip ever by any chance entered the soup of this artiste that had not the form of a rhomboid or a trapezium. Apart from those slight defects of character, M. Poloutykin was a really good, honest fellow.

On the day of our first meeting, M. Poloutykin invited me to come and pass the night at his house without ceremony.

"From this to my house," said he, "is about five versts;* to go on foot will fatigue us too much; we will go to Khor's house."

"Who is Khor?"

"O! he is one of my peasants. He lives just at hand."

We then went to Khor's. This man lived in the large clearing of a thick forest, and occupied a good farm house, built of fir, with all the usual appurtenances of out-houses, yards, cart-houses, stables, and wells. In front of the dwelling-house was a long flight of steps covered in, and sustained by four elegant little pillars.

* A Russian verst is about two-thirds of an English mile.

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We were received on entering by a fine hearty-looking fellow of about twenty.

"Ah! it is you, Fedia," said the master, "is Khor at home?"

"No; he has gone with his car to the village," replied the lad, smiling and showing a row of teeth white as snow. "Do you wish me to put horses to the telejka?"*

"Yes, but first give us some kvass."†

The walls of the house were simply the logs of which it was built, but shaped with the hatchet and whitened with chalk, and did not display the rude images of Souzdal stuck over with crumbs of bread, which one sees too often in the cottages of the peasantry, where their chief purpose seems to be to attract dust and all sorts of insects; but in the corner of honour, before a holy image carved in massive silver, ascended the flame of a consecrated lamp; a table made of lime tree stood below, and before it a large bench, which had been scraped and washed with great care. Neither in the chinks of the logs nor round the window frames could I see running the active moth, the merry cricket, or the sluggish beetle.

The youth reappeared with a large white pitcher full of kvass, fresh and foaming, and an enormous piece of wheaten bread, to which was added a dozen pickled cucumbers swimming in a wooden bowl. All these were placed neatly in order on the table; and the lad went to the door, and leaning against the porch, looked stedfastly at us from this position, his countenance beaming with good humour. We had scarcely finished our frugal repast, when we heard the telejka come rolling and jolting into the yard. We went out immediately.

* An open carriage without springs.

† A common drink of the Russians, bitter, but very refreshing.

A young lad of fourteen or fifteen, of a fresh complexion and with his hair all in ringlets, was seated with squared elbows on the driving box, making strenuous efforts to restrain the fiery ardour of a young piebald. Round the car stood six young sturdy striplings, all bearing a marked resemblance to Fedia.

"These are Khor's sons," said my companion.

"Yes, all Khorites," added Fedia, who had followed us to the door steps; "but we are not all here; Potapp is working in the wood, and Sidor is driving his father. You, there, Vacia, drive carefully; mind it is the bârin* you have in the car. Only take good care of the ups and downs in the road; keep a good hand on your beast, else you will hurt him, and what is worse, jolt the master dreadfully."

The other Khorites seemed quite pleased at the drollery of Fedia.

When we had taken our places, M. Poloutykin cried out in a solemn tone,

"Hallo, put in Astronomer."

Fedia lifted the dog into the air, and laid him, a little surprised, and with a doubtful satisfaction, under the seat, which was formed of a narrow plank. Vacia slackened the reins.

We had driven along for quarter of an hour, when M. Poloutykin said to me, pointing to a little house very low roofed, "Here is my counting house; will you go in?"

"With pleasure."

"There is nobody about the place, but I wish to show you what excellent water I have here."

The house consisted of two empty rooms. An old man, blind of an eye, came running to us.

* The master or lord.

"Good day, Miniaïtch; bring us some water," said his master.

The old man went out and reappeared with a bottle of very cold, pure water, and two glasses; it was the water of the spring. We drank each a glass, and the old man saluted us with low obeisances during the operation, as if, by way of thanks for having done honour to his nectar, he was offering to his honoured guests a thousand wishes for a healthy and happy life.

"Come now, we can continue our journey," said my companion to me. "I sold here, some time ago, and with profit too, four acres of wood to the merchant Allelouïef."

Half an hour afterwards we drove into the grounds of a lordly mansion.

"Tell me, pray," said I to Poloutykin at supper, "how comes it that Khor has a place of his own, where he lives secluded from the other peasants?"

"Why, he is a shrewd, long-sighted fellow; five-and-twenty years ago his hut was burned down; he came to my father, and asked permission of him, on condition of paying a good yearly rent, to go to a clearing in the forest, near a marsh, and build a house there for himself and the children that God might be pleased to give him.

"'But why go to live in a fen?' said my father.

"'Oh, that is nothing; you won't exact any more statute labour from me, but do you yourself fix a just yearly rent.'—'Fifty roubles* a year!'—'Very good, thank you.'—'But you are not to expect that I will make any allowance for you in the payment.'—'I assure you, you will be paid punctually every term-day.' So he established himself as you have seen; all the other

* About £2 : 10s.

peasants then nicknamed him Khor (polecat), and the name still sticks to him."

"And how has he got on?"

"Capitally. He pays me to-day a hundred good tselkovs,* and I have already warned him more than once that I will exact more, unless he wishes to redeem himself; I try earnestly to persuade him to do so, but he swears by the great gods that he has not a single kopeck for that; the simpleton!"

The next day, after breakfast, we set out on a shooting expedition. Poloutykin again took the road to the hut which he called his counting-house, and on approaching it, shouted—

"Kalinytch!"

"Here, sir, here," replied a voice; "I am putting on my laptis."†

We drove away in the car at a slow pace, and just as we were emerging from the further extremity of the neighbouring village, we were joined by a man of about forty, lean and tall, with a small head hanging down, not in front but behind. An air of good humour playing upon a countenance hale, sunburnt, and studded with warts, pleased me at the very first glance. This was Kalinytch. I found afterwards that this man followed his master every day to the field, carrying his game-bag and sometimes his gun; he has had a long acquaintance with birds; he runs to seek for fresh water, to gather berries from the copse and order the drochka; without him sporting would not be possible for a Sybarite like M. Poloutykin. Besides, Kalinytch has muscles of iron, and is a man of a happy and joyous temperament. He never ceases singing, and while doing so, he casts rapid glances around him in twenty directions at once; he speaks a little through the nose,

* A tselkov is about 3s. † Shoes made of plaited bark.

winks, while smiling, with his clear blue eyes, and has a habit of handling his beard, which he wears peaked after the Jewish fashion. He took long strides as he walked, but without any appearance of haste, leaning lightly on a slender staff of considerable length.

In the course of the day he and I exchanged several words, and he rendered me a thousand little services without any appearance of officiousness or servility; but in his attentions to his master, the man showed all the care and assiduity of an old nurse. The heat of the day having become insupportable, he conducted us to his cottage, situated in a thicket, and ushered us into a square room, where bundles of aromatic herbs were hung up to dry; he prepared two couches of fine fresh hay, and then putting a net-bag over his head, took a knife, a fork, and a bit of thin lath, and went to procure us some honeycomb. We drank of a beautiful liquid honey, clear as spring water, and then fell asleep, lulled by the humming of the bees, and the rustling of the leaves of the wood which surrounded the little cabin. I was awakened by a breeze of wind, and opening my eyes, I saw Kalinytch seated on the threshold of the half-opened door, attempting to make a wooden spoon with a pocket knife. For fully quarter of an hour I contemplated with delight the really good face of this simple and primitive man—that forehead so calm and serene, like a beautiful autumn sunset. M. Poloutykin having now awoke, we again set out. I certainly had made the most of our short stay in the hut, thanks to a kind of enjoyment which I know how to give myself. It is delicious to me, after a long day's shooting, and a sportsman's sound sleep, to lie motionless with eyes half-open on an excellent hay bed; there is at such a time a sweet inclination of the body towards repose, the face is as red as a peony with the fresh colour of vigorous health,

and the eye is loaded with a soft and luxurious languor. We again commenced to beat about the fields and covers; and at our return home in the evening we supped as very few have the good fortune to do even in the country. During supper I renewed the conversation about Khor, and made special inquiries about Kalinytch.

"Kalinytch," said my host, "is an excellent man, a good peasant, and in every way a serviceable fellow. It is a pity that he does not marry or build a decent hut. I always take him with me—every day he accompanies me; and how could he find time, after all, to build a little house for himself?"

"Impossible that he should."——We retired.

On the following morning M. Poloutykin had to betake himself to town along with his neighbour Pitchoukoff. The latter it seems had, while cultivating his property, enclosed a little bit of land, which now formed a subject of dispute. Whether they parted good friends or not, I cannot tell. I went shooting alone to-day. In the evening I almost unconsciously struck into the path which led to Khor's farm. I found on the threshold of the house an old man, gray, half bald, and of small stature, but broad shouldered, and altogether well built; this was Khor himself. I looked at the man with great interest, and the more so as the general outline of his head and face recalled to my mind the busts I had seen of Socrates—a brow high and knotted, eyes small and piercing, and a nose short and somewhat flat. He led me into his cottage. Fedia served me with black bread and milk. Khor sat down on the bench which went almost round the entire room.* Gently stroking his beard, he began to converse

* Fixed to the wall, as in all Russian cottages.

with me. He appeared to me to have a very decided opinion of his own importance as a man of sense; he spoke and moved slowly, and from time to time a movement of his lip, repeated by his long moustache, betrayed an almost imperceptible smile. We talked of seed time, harvest, and the peasant's way of life. He seemed to entertain the same opinion as myself on every subject on which we touched. Soon I felt this annoying, and began to be sensible of a loss of dignity in thus carrying on a conversation with no apparent aim. Khor was discreet and reserved; he did not think it prudent or expedient to show himself in any other light. Here is a sample of our conversation :—

"Well, Khor," I said, "why remain a serf instead of purchasing your freedom, when it is in your power?"

"Why should I redeem myself? I know our master, and what rent and service I have to pay him; and he is a good master."

"But in any case, it is better to live in freedom," I replied in a low tone. He looked a little askance, and replied, "Ah! yes."

"Well, then, why not procure your freedom?"

Khor first looked down, and then raising his head, replied, "To procure one's freedom requires money, sir; and I have none."

"Come, now, my good old fellow."

"And suppose Khor a free man," he added in a low tone, as if speaking to himself; "every man who shaves* might still assume superiority over him."

"You may shave too, and that difficulty will soon be got over."

"What is the beard, after all? A kind of grass, and quickly enough mown if we please."

"Well, what then?"

* The beard is worn only by the lower classes in Russia.

"Khor would pass directly into the rank of merchants. They live well, and have kept their beards."

"Well, I should suppose you are no novice in trade?"

"Not altogether; a little oil and tallow . . . Would you like me to order a car to be yoked for your use?"

At this remark, made in a tone perfectly natural and obliging, I thought, "Here is a man, now, who is deficient neither in intelligence nor in politeness."

"No," I said aloud; "no, I do not wish a car; but to-morrow I mean to shoot round your enclosure, and till then, with your permission, I should like to sleep in your hay-shed."

"We shall be highly honoured; but will you be comfortable on the hay? The women will stretch a sheet over it, and provide you with a pillow. Hallo! *babas!*"* he cried, rising; "babas, here! and do you, Fedia, go with them, for these women are so stupid."

Quarter of an hour after, Fedia, provided with a lantern, conducted me into the hay-shed, and there I stretched myself luxuriously, my dog at my feet. Fedia wished me good night, and shutting the door behind him, which, by the bye, closed to a marvel, left me. It was some time, however, before I slept. The cow first approached the door, and lowed energetically more than once; my dog got up to tell her what she had done, and thereupon she went somewhere else. Then came a pig, and burrowed with its snout I know not where. A horse which happened to be somewhere in my vicinity began to make a great noise munching the hay in its rack, and, when it had finished this operation, it commenced to blow and snort in a violent way. At last I slept.

At dawn Fedia awoke me. I had taken a great fancy to this young fellow; and, so far as I could see,

* Female Domestics.

he was Khor's favourite. I perceived, indeed, that they were in the habit of amusing each other with mutual pleasantries. The old man came to meet me as I made my exit from the shed, and whether it was because I had spent the night under his roof, or for some other reason, he was much kinder and more communicative than on the evening before.

"The samovar* has been set down for you," he said cordially; "pray come to breakfast."

We sat down together at table. A robust girl, one of Khor's pretty daughters, brought a basin of milk, and then all the sons entered the room, one after the other.

"What a fine set of fellows you have there!" I said to the old man.

"Yes," said Khor, as he chewed a little bit of sugar; "it seems to me that our boys have no reason to complain either of me or their mother."

"And do they all live with you?"

"All. They choose to do so, and I do not complain of them any more than they complain of me."

"Are they all married?"

"Look there at that good-for-nothing rascal," replied Khor, pointing to Fedia, who, according to his custom, was leaning against the door, "he will not make up his mind. As to Vaska, he is still young enough; there is no hurry."

"And why should I marry?" replied Fedia; "I am very well as I am. I cannot for the life of me tell why any one should take a wife. To howl in couples? Eh?"

"So, so, my merry fellow! We know you well. I have seen many a silver ring on your fingers. You love to put your nose to our master's servant-girls, as you

* A tea-kettle provided with a fire and a little chimney.

would to a bouquet. 'Oh the villain! just look at him; will he let me alone?'" added the old man, imitating the voice of Poloutykin's servants. "So, so, Mr. Clean-hands."

"What good is there in a wife?"

"A wife," said Khor, gravely, "is man's best servant. She is two working arms added to his own; and they make four in all. She is a domestic."

"Of what use is a domestic to me, I should like to know?"

"Ah! we know you; you would fain stir the fire with your neighbour's hands. One knows what you are worth, you people who refuse to marry."

"Well, marry me, then, if it is as you say. Well! What? You say nothing to that."

"Enough, you jesting rascal, enough; you see we only weary the gentleman. I will marry you some of these days, be assured. But you, sir, pray pardon him; he is a great child—a booby who can scarcely boast of down on his chin yet, not to speak of a hair. To think of talking rationally to him!"

Fedia shook his head.

"Is Khor at home?" cried a well-known voice from without; and Kalinytch entered the room, carrying a beautiful bunch of wild strawberries, fruit and leaves, gathered by his own hand for his friend the polecat. The old man gave him the most cordial reception. I looked at Kalinytch with surprise; I could not have believed that a *moujik*,* a semi-savage like this, was capable of such refined attention.

I set out to shoot to-day four hours later than usual; and I spent three days in this fashion, doing my best not to be a disagreeable guest to old Khor. I took a deep interest in my new friends. How I had the good

* Peasant, boor.

fortune to gain their confidence I cannot say; but before two days had elapsed, they conversed with me without restraint. It was a great pleasure to me to listen to them, and observe them, within their own family circle. Khor and Kalinytch (who came daily, M. Poloutykin being still detained in town) were very different men. Khor was a positive and practical man; of an administrative head, caring for nothing but the intellectual. Kalinytch, on the contrary, was romantic in his nature—an enthusiastic man, and given to poetic contemplation. Khor understood the real and palpable better than any man. He had established himself securely in life; had provided for the future as well as for the present; took care to be on good terms with his master and other powers. Kalinytch was shod with shoes of plaited bark, and possessed nothing, but smiled indifferently at everything. Khor had sent into the world a numerous progeny, all subject to himself, and united under his authority. Kalinytch had had once upon a time a wife whom he dreaded, and had never had children. Khor had long since discovered his master's real character, and saw him through and through. Kalinytch had a pious veneration, and a species of idolatry for M. Poloutykin. Khor loved and patronised Kalinytch as a creature of a tender and feeble nature, and worthy of affection. Kalinytch loved Khor from esteem and respect. Khor spoke little; talked ironically and jocularly when he wished to speak and say nothing; and meditated much. Kalinytch spoke with fire and enthusiasm; and was endowed with many virtues, which Khor himself willingly acknowledged. For example, it was believed that he could exorcise eye-strokes, visions, and mania; could drive away destructive worms and caterpillars; and had generally what is called *the lucky hand*. I have seen Khor en-

treat him to lead a horse, which he just bought, into the stable, and the magician yielded with a serious gravity to the wish of the old sceptic. Kalinytch loved best to be on intimate terms with nature; Khor with men and the social state. Kalinytch, an entire stranger to the effort of reasoning, cradled himself in his favourite ideas, and believed in all blindly; Khor at times raised himself even to those points of view from which human life seems a more or less revolting irony; he had seen much, studied men and things, and numerous are the facts which I first learned from him.

Thus I first knew through him, that in summer, just before the hay making, a little cart of a peculiar form appears in the villages; and that a man in a *cafetan* drives about in this vehicle selling scythes. He takes a rouble, cash, and a fourth, a third, or it may be a half besides, if he gives credit. It so happens that all the peasants purchase his merchandise on credit. Two or three weeks afterwards he reappears and demands his money, and as the peasant has just brought in his oats, he has wherewith to discharge his debt. He goes to the tavern, and there transacts his little business with the merchant. There have been proprietors who have entertained the bright idea of purchasing these scythes cash, and selling them to the peasants at cost price; but, incredible as it sounds, the latter, instead of being grateful, have received this proposal with dislike and even alarm; for they would thus be deprived of the pleasure of striking the scythe to discover its quality, of listening to the sound of the vibrating metal, of turning the instrument round and round, and of saying twenty times to the trading sharper, "Ha, ha, my good fellow, this is no great thing; it sounds cracked; there is a flaw here." The same comedy is repeated at the purchase of reaping hooks, with this difference, how-

ever, that the women are engaged in this business, and sometimes drive the trader to the necessity of giving them a drubbing to teach them how to behave.

Khor informed me that there is another business in which the women have much more to suffer for their folly. The purveyors for paper manufactories entrust the purchase of rags to people who in some districts are called *Eagles*. These Eagles receive a certain sum from their employers, and immediately launch out in pursuit of their prey. But, unlike the noble bird whose name they usurp, they do not pounce openly and boldly on the object of their search, but have recourse to cunning and trickery. He leaves his vehicle among the bushes, at some distance from the village, and approaches furtively by the marshes and backways like a passing traveller, a pauper, or a vagabond. The women divine somehow or other, apparently by scent, the Eagle's presence, and go to meet him. The business is quickly transacted: a *baba* for a few pence hands over to the Eagle not only all the rags that have been put aside in the hut as useless, but even her husband's shirt and her own petticoat. Latterly, these women have almost adopted the custom of robbing themselves, and of giving away bits of hemp and flax; this, as being a great hit, is an immense advance in the trading tricks of the Eagles. The husbands, on the other hand, have become very acute, and on the least suspicion, or the first vague rumour of the Eagle's appearance, they have recourse in a very brisk style to preventive or corrective measures; and, in truth, is it not an insult? If a man has any rights at all, one of them surely is selling his own hemp. They have the great satisfaction of selling their hemp, not in town, which would necessitate their going with their merchandise, but in the village itself to passing traders, who, making

a point of never carrying scales with them, assure the peasant that a *pood* * of hemp is forty handfuls, and one knows well what the capacity of a Russian's hand is—what it can grasp, particularly when he grasps with good will. In this way what does not find its way to the Eagle through the wife is handed over to the vulture by the husband.

This is a specimen of the recitals to which I, a person of no experience in country life, have often listened in the family of a peasant full of intelligence and sagacity. Khor put twenty questions to me for one which I addressed to him. He learnt that I had travelled abroad, and no one would have believed what a curiosity arose in him all of a sudden at this information, and the equally strong desire for knowledge which Kalinytch, who unexpectedly came in, displayed. The latter, however, was chiefly interested only in plants, animals, landscapes, mountains, cataracts, extraordinary buildings, and populous cities. Khor, on the other hand, was interested in political and administrative questions. He attempted to guess at what I withheld, then to sum up the information he had gathered, and make deductions from it. He would say—

"Is it in this matter among them as it is amongst us, or is it different? Say, bârin, say—tell us."

"Ah, heavens! what a fine sight that must be—a harbour!" cried Kalinytch during my recitals.

Khor kept silence, knitted his thick eyebrows, and at distant intervals only made some such remarks as—"That is a thing which would be of no value among us."—"That is very good indeed."—"Ah! an excellent institution." I cannot recount all the questions which this man addressed to me; and what end would be served by my doing so? But from our conversations

* Forty Russian pounds.

I gained this conviction—a conviction which to my readers may be perhaps unexpected—that Peter the Great was the Russian *par excellence*—profoundly a Russian above all in his glorious attempt to regenerate his country. The Russian is so confident in his strength and energy, that he is prepared in everything, and for everything; he makes no enquiry into his past, but looks proudly before him. What is good pleases him; he is open to whatever is in accordance with reason, wherever it is to be found, and accepts it without asking whence it comes. His good sense smiles instinctively at the transcendant wisdom of the German, although Khor declares that they must be a people well worth studying, and under whom he would willingly put himself to school. On account of his very exceptional position, and the factitious independence which he had been able to create for himself, I have heard this man say things which you would not get out of another man's head were you to grind it in a mill. He understood his position. It was in conversing with Khor that I understood for the first time the simple and poetical language of the Russian peasant. His ideas and general conceptions of things were comprehensive—very comprehensive, and indeed surprising when one considers that this intelligent man could not read. Kalinytch could; and Khor used to say of him, "The alphabet bees have come of their own accord and put themselves at this queer fellow's service, and he keeps them well, in faith."

"You have had your children taught reading?" I said to him.

After a momentary silence, he replied, "Fedia reads."

"And the others?"

"The others? No."

"How so?" The old man was silent for a little, and then turned the conversation.

In other respects, and notwithstanding his general intelligence, Khor had a considerable number of prejudices in his head; for example, he despised women from the bottom of his soul, and his attacks upon them were never exhausted. His wife, old and peevish, took up her position on the stove-shed, and this she scarcely ever quitted—snarling and growling from it without ceasing and without mercy from morning to night. The sons paid no attention to her, but the other women were kept in a state of mortal fear. There is nothing surprising in this contempt of women, when one considers that in Russia there is no song more faithfully preserved than that which represents a mother-in-law as saying, "What sort of a son are you? What sort of head of a family will you be, you who have a young wife, and never give her a beating?" . . .

On one occasion I ventured to intercede for the poor women, and attempted to rouse the old man's compassion; he tranquilly replied, "Ah, master, you have indeed a superabundance of good-nature! Women! this one cries, that bewails, and the other finds it necessary to deprive herself of some of her hair; and if a man tries to intermeddle, he does not come out clean, and only makes bad worse." Sometimes the old woman descended from her fort, and, calling the dog, which she had heard stirring behind the door, belaboured the poor brute with the poker, without its being possible for any mortal to say why. On other occasions she would establish herself under cover of the staircase, and from that position snap with great consistency at every comer for a good hour, as Khor used to say, as if she were fulfilling some vow or duty,

or performing an exercise, which everybody else fortunately regarded with supreme indifference. She feared her husband, however, and at a word from him, she would clamber back to the stove with all speed.

It was curious and amusing to hear Khor's discussions with Kalinytch about M. Poloutykin.

"Come, Khor, I intreat you not to say a word against my master; you know that he always" . .

"Loves you? Good. Why doesn't he give you boots then?"

"Boots?—to me?—me, who am only a moujik?"

"I am a moujik too, and yet see!" So saying, Khor raised his right foot, pointing out to his friend a boot made of a leather which might have been manufactured of the hide of a mammoth or mastodon.

"Bah! you are not a moujik like the rest of us."

"Why does he not give you money to buy even well-made laptis? You go shooting with him regularly —the laptis of your manufacture seldom last the day."

"He does give me money for laptis."

"Indeed! Oh! yes, I forgot; last year he presented you with a *grivennik*."*

Kalinytch turned aside his head with visible annoyance. Khor burst into loud laughter; merriment took possession of his whole face, and his little eyes seemed to have disappeared altogether.

Kalinytch sung agreeably, accompanying himself on the *balalaïca*.† Khor could listen to him for a long time; but there always came a moment when, apparently affected by certain tones of the instrument, he all of a sudden hung his head on one side, and in a melancholy tone, began to chaunt his favourite song, "O my fate, my sad fate" (*Dôlia ty, maïa dôlia*). On these occasions Fedia never failed to remark, "Well,

* Twopenny piece. † A kind of guitar.

look at father lamenting; old men have always something to complain about." But Khor, heedless of the remark, put his left cheek in the hollow of his hand, and shutting his eyes, continued imperturbably to bewail his sad fate. Spite of these little recreations which my host indulged in, there was not within a circle of thirty versts so hard working a man as he. He was always in action; he repaired the bottom of the cart, strengthened the fences, and resewed the seams of the harness to make them more secure. To speak the truth, however, I must say that he attached little importance to neatness and cleanliness; and when I one day made a remark on this, he replied, that a cottage must smell of mån, vegetables, and new bread.

"Go and see," I rejoined, "how clean and neat everything is in Kalinytch's hermitage."

"If it were otherwise with him, he would not have the bees to take charge of," he said, sighing. I could easily infer from this that the keeping of hives did not succeed with him so well as with his neighbour.

The evening before my departure, as we talked on this and the other subject, he naturally found occasion to say to me—

"Do you possess land, master?"

"Yes."

"Is it far from this?"

"A hundred versts."

"Do you dwell on your own land?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"But you like better to traverse the country gun in hand, do you not?"

"Sporting is my delight."

"Very good. Shoot as many woodcocks and heathcocks as you can; they suit the stomachs of sportsmen well, and everybody knows how to cook them; but

down there on your property, believe me, the elder of your village is being often, often changed, meanwhile."*

On the fourth day, towards evening, M. Poloutykin sent to inform me of his return. I parted from the old man with regret; I bade a cordial adieu to him, Fedia, and the family, and got into the cart with Kalinytch. "It will be a fine day to-morrow," I said to him, as I looked at the sky, which was very clear.

"No; it will rain," he answered. "The duck hastens with a rapid flight from the open ground, and the grass smells strongly."

We entered a copse overgrown with underwood. Kalinytch sang, spite of the jolting of the cart, on the shaft of which he was seated, and kept always looking towards the west.

On the following day, I left the hospitable roof of M. Poloutykin.

* In the villages the serfs belonging to the soil choose a head and representative from among themselves.

CHAPTER II.

ERMOLAÏ AND THE MILLER'S WIFE—RUSSIAN SERFS IN THE COUNTRY TOWNS.

One evening Ermolaï and myself went to place ourselves in tiaga; but possibly a great number of my readers do not know what sportsmen mean by *tiaga*. It is this:—

Quarter of an hour before sunset, you slip into the wood unaccompanied by dogs; you choose a place in a thicket or at the edge of a forest, and take accurate note of your position, examine the cock of your gun, and exchange a glance with your sporting companion. The quarter of an hour has elapsed, the last ray of the sun has disappeared, but it is still clear and bright in the wood; the atmosphere is lucid and transparent; the birds warble in mutual rivalry, and the young herbs shine with a dazzling joyous green. You wait patiently. The twilight gloom descends into the forest by little and little; the rich rŏseate streaks slip along the projecting roots, and then over the trunks of the trees; thencĕ they rise to the lowest branches with their thin leafage, and thus gain gradually the thickly-foliaged tops, which stand out motionless in the calm air, as if overpowered by sleep. The tender young leaves on the summits resemble the dying light of a lamp, flickering unsteadily before its final extinction. Over the glowing purple of the extreme west an azure drapery

is let down, behind which its glory is obscured and vanishes. The trees exhale more freely their various perfumes; a lazy breeze, gentle and moist, comes, one knows not whence, and breathes upon your face and hands, and envelopes you in its soft caress. The birds fall asleep—not all at the same moment, but according to their kinds—first the chaffinch, then the wren, then the ortolan. In the heart of the wood it grows darker and darker; you see peeping out on the azure sky above, fine and subtle points of light—these are the stars, which timidly begin to show themselves. All the birds are now asleep; the red-tails and the witwalls, to be sure, still warble a little, but it is in a sleepy way. Now, at last, even they are silent. Still once more there resounds overhead the sonorous voice of the lapwing; at a distance—where, it is impossible to say—the yellow-hammer utters its melancholy cry. The nightingale has sung a prelude—the first few notes and nothing more. The heart beats with impatience, and all of a sudden—but it is given only to sportsmen to understand me—all at once the silence and solitude is broken by a whistling croak of a peculiar kind; a regular flapping of agile wings is heard, and the *vald-chnep* (the large woodcock) inclining his long beak, gracefully darts out from behind a shaded birch, right in front of your gun. That is placing one's-self in tiaga.

I was there with Ermolaï. Ermolaï—I must make you acquainted with him. This man, whom you see posted in tiaga, about twenty paces from me, is strong and vigorous; he is not more than forty-five, a tall slender man, with thin nose, low brow, grey eyes, dishevelled hair, and large sneering lips. He wears in all seasons a fresh-butter coloured nankin, of a European shape, but with the addition of a belt; his trowsers were

capacious, and of a blue colour, and his head crowned with a little skull cap provided with ear-laps, which had been presented to him by some lord of the soil in a moment of good humour. On his belt were hung two bags—one in front, like a small wallet twisted in the middle, so as to contain both powder and lead, the other behind to hold the game. As to his gun-wadding, he might always be seen taking it out of the inexhaustible lining of his skull cap. He could easily have purchased both a powder-flask and game-bag with the proceeds of his shooting, but he never dreamt of such luxuries, and he continued to excite the admiration of every one by the cleverness with which in loading his gun, he avoided scattering his shot on the ground, or mixing it with his powder. His gun was a flint one, and had the excellent quality of recoiling, as few guns could do. It recoiled with such force, indeed, that the poor man's right cheek was all swollen with its blows. How he shot so accurately with such a primitive instrument, it would defy the best sportsman to say, but he never missed his aim. He was lord and master of a dog which answered to the name of Valetka, and a marvellous creature it was. Ermolaï never gave it anything to eat. "I go to feed a cringing hound!" he would say, "what an idea! Besides, my dog has much more intelligence than other dogs; he provides his own food, and I have nothing to do with that matter." So reasoned Ermolaï. And in truth Valetka, though the most indifferent eye could not fail to observe his extreme leanness, lived for many a long year after—never disappearing long enough to make any one uneasy about him, or cause one to fear that he had any intention of abandoning his master. Once, and once only—he was then young and in the ardent spring-time of his passions—he absented himself for a couple of days; but,

I repeat it, he committed this escapade only once. The distinctive feature of Valetka's character was a complete indifference for everything in the world. If he had not been a dog, I would have said that he had been easily disenchanted. He was habitually in a reclining attitude with his tail drawn under him; he snuffed and shivered occasionally, but never, most assuredly, never smiled, (I take it for granted that you know that dogs smile, and very sweetly too, but this by way of parenthesis). Let it be known, moreover, that he was ridiculously ugly, and that no servant, male or female, let slip an occasion of making merry over his disagreeable exterior. Valetka bore all these sarcasms with a philosophy worthy of the highest respect. Should he happen, through a weakness common among more than dogs, to put his dainty nose inside the half-opened door of some lordly kitchen, to inhale the heavenly exhalations which proceeded from it, his appearance was at once a signal for merriment among the cooks, and with one accord they set off in full pursuit of the poor animal, with demoniacal cries and curses which would have ruffled the tempers of the associates of all the academies in the world. When on duty, it was really impossible to fatigue him, and he had a fair nose; but if by accident he stumbled on a wounded hare incapable of outrunning him, he never failed to devour it to the last and least bone—it mattered not where he fell in with it, provided only it was in a retired spot, and at a respectful distance from Ermolaï, who, if he detected him in such a fault, burst out into fearfully abusive language, in every dialect known and unknown; anger in such a case made an inspired neologist of him.

Ermolaï belonged to one of my neighbours, a gentleman of the old school. The lords of the soil who are cut after this pattern do not love woodcocks, and confine

themselves to the birds of the poultry-yard. It is only on great occasions—family anniversaries, grand festivals, and elections of magistrates, that their cooks proceed to dress long-beaked birds, trusting a great deal to chance, according to the habit of the genuine Russian, who has never a very clear perception of what he is engaged in. In these circumstances, they invent such singular sauces, and such extraordinary spices, that the partaker of a splendid banquet examines with unsuccessful curiosity the unknown dishes which are presented to him, without being able to summon up courage to put anything in his mouth.

Ermolaï was bound to furnish as a kind of tribute to his master's kitchen, two pairs of wood or heathcocks monthly; and this tribute paid, he had full liberty to go where he pleased, and live according to his humour.

This man had been exempted from all other service, from a belief that he was good for nothing. It was well understood that nobody provided him with either powder or shot; and it was probably on this principle that he acted towards his dog. Ermolaï was a man of a strange nature, careless as a bird, of a wandering and absent mind, heavy and awkward in outward appearance, very much given to chatter, but never dwelling long on the same subject. He walked like a man whose knees are bandy; his huge body oscillated like a pendulum from right to left; and by dint of swinging legs and trunk in contrary directions, he contrived to travel his forty miles in a day. Leading such a life, he was of course exposed to little inconveniences of every imaginable kind. He passed his nights in marshes, on trees, in sheds, or under bridges; more than once he had been locked up in granaries, cellars, and coach-houses; more than once he had been deprived of his gun; more than once he had been turned out of doors,

denuded of the most indispensable clothing; more than once he had been beaten and soundly thrashed; and his dog had had its back almost broken, and had been locked up to prevent its ever rejoining him—and yet he had always reappeared in his master's lands, and in his master's court-yard, with his clothes on his back, his gun in his hand, and his dog at his heels. One could not call him a humorist, although he was always in very good humour; he seemed on the whole a hare-brained fellow. He loved to drink at honest tavern social meetings, but he gave little time to it; he rose, paid, and walked off.

"Where the devil are you going? It is pitch-dark.'

"To Tchaplino."

"What necessity is there to drag yourself all the way to Tchaplino at such an hour as this; it is ten good versts from this."

"I mean to spend the night in peasant Sophron's."

"Sleep where you are. You must be mad."

"No, I will sleep at Tchaplino."

And so he goes, and traversing thickets and swamps, reaches peasant Sophron's, who is little disposed to let him enter his yard at such an hour, but rather ready to administer some vigorous cuffs to him, crying out at the same time, "You come here to disturb honest folks' night's rest." All these slight drawbacks in his character only served to bring out his merits in stronger relief,—his skill in procuring a supply of fine fresh fish at the time of the spring floods, his art of catching cray-fish, the peculiar talent he had for scenting out game, decoying the quail, snaring the goshawk, entrapping larks, and catching nightingales by a most remarkable imitation of the most joyous notes of their song. Meanwhile, he was sadly deficient in one point, and that was the training of dogs; he had not the requisite patience.

He was married, and every week condescended to devote a few hours to his wife. The latter lived in a wretched little cabin, almost a ruin, if it might be called *living*, never to know in the evening how the hunger of the following day was to be satiated; and happy she was when she had an opportunity of earning a few pence for herself.

Ermolaï, this careless and simple man, had a harsh and gruff tone when he addressed her. On entering the house he assumed a morose and threatening aspect, and the unhappy woman trembled at the glance of the ill-bred fellow, and ran to expend even her last kopeck to procure him a little brandy; and when he ascended with dignity the stove-shed, where he usually slept soundly, she covered him carefully with his toulup.* It has happened to myself more than once to observe in him involuntary movements which indicated a fierce nature. I never liked his expression, for example, when he began to devour the bird which he had knocked down. But Ermolaï never remained four-and-twenty hours in his own house, and when he had passed the limits of his lord's territory he became known by the name of *Ermolka* (a term of endearment), and was called by this appellation a hundred versts round, and, indeed, privately adopted the name himself, in the places he frequented most. The lowest scullions in his master's kitchen considered themselves personages of much more importance than this vagrant, and treated him familiarly, by way of shewing their pretended superiority. The peasants who formerly used to drive him away, and hunt him like a hare, only desisting when they had given him no small trouble, had ended by accustoming themselves to the strange ways of this

* A sort of cloak made of cloth for summer, and sheep's fleece for winter covering.

savage Nimrod, and permitted him now to wander freely wherever he pleased, nay, entered into conversation with him, and at times even offered him a bit of bread. Such was the man who was now my sporting companion, and with whom I made *tiaga* in an extensive birch-wood on the banks of the upper Ista.

Many of the Russian streams have, like the Volga, an upper and a lower river, and such is the Ista. This little river forms a continuous succession of windings, and one could not find in its whole extent, from the source to the mouth, a straight course of half a mile. There are points of view on the upper river from which one can see its banks for a distance of ten versts, all covered with dykes, ponds, mills, and kitchen-gardens, surrounded by white hazel trees and flocks of geese. The Ista abounds in fish, especially in mullets and cabots, which the peasantry in warm weather catch with their hands under the bushes which overhang the river. The little black thrush flutters and chirps along the sides of the steep banks, which are here and there enlivened by an unexpected fountain of cool and crystalline water. Flocks of wild ducks shew half their bodies on the surface of the ponds, casting vigilant and suspicious glances on all sides. Herons stand out in clear outline in the shadow of the river windings, balancing themselves on the most pointed and hazardous projections of the bank.

We had been more than an hour in tiaga, and had each killed a brace of large woodcocks. As our intention was to try our fortune again before daybreak,* we resolved to sleep at the mill, which was only a short way off. We left the wood, and descended the slope of the valley leading towards the bank of the river, which

* There is both a morning and evening *tiaga;* dawn is as favourable as twilight.

at this moment was rolling along in waves of a sombre blue. The air was thick and heavy with the night vapours. Having reached the mill-yard, we knocked at the gate, and the dogs barked furiously.

"Who is there?" cried the gruff voice of some one half asleep.

"Sportsmen, who wish to pass the night here. Open, we shall pay."

"I will go and ask the miller," replied the servant, muttering curses as he went. We heard him enter, and returning almost immediately, he shouted—

"No, no; the master forbids me to open the gate."

"Why?"

"He is afraid.—Sportsmen! A mistake is easily made; you will set fire to the mill. Aye, forsooth! Guns loaded—and powder too!"

"What nonsense is that you are talking?"

"Aye, but listen;—no later than last year some grain and fish carriers put up here; how it happened we cannot tell, but they set fire to our place, and everything was burned down."

"Ah, good brother! you would not have us, for all that, pass the night in the open air, would you?"

"You may do as you like."

And so saying he left us with a quick and noisy step, possibly to avoid hearing the agreeable wishes which Ermolaï expressed for him and his master.

"Let us go to the village then, and make the best of it," said my companion, sighing. But it was two versts from where we were.

"No," I replied, "we shall sleep here outside, and make the best of it on the spot; and the miller will not surely refuse a few bundles of straw for our money."

Ermolaï approved, and we recommenced to knock at the gate.

"What do you want?" cried the voice of the servant again; "you have had your answer."

We explained to the man what we wanted. He went to consult his master and returned with him. The bolt was drawn and the miller stood in the gateway. He was a man of high stature, face fat and oily, bull-necked, and with a large paunch. He had no objections to what I proposed. About a hundred yards from the mill there was a shed open to the four winds. They brought straw and hay, and the miller's man busied himself in making ready on the bank a good old *samovar* (tea apparatus fitted with a stove) sitting on his heels and blowing vigorously into the funnel of the chafing-dish. The coals as they took fire threw a brilliant light on his boyish countenance. The miller now ran to arouse his wife, and then at last even proposed that we should sleep in his cottage; but I preferred the open air. The miller's wife now brought us milk, eggs, potatoes, and bread; soon the water boiled and we sat down to tea. Thick vapours rose from the river, and there was not a breath of wind, only at intervals the broom emitted its peculiar crackling sound; from the mill-wheel there came a low rumbling noise, drops fell from the flanges and lively little jets of water forced their way out through the chinks in the dam. We made a bivouac-fire among the stones. While Ermolaï put a dozen potatoes among the ashes, I fell asleep. A slight noise disturbed me, and I awoke; raising my head I saw the miller's wife seated before the fire on a tub turned upside down, and conversing with my companion. In a moment I discovered in her whole manner the *ci-devant* lady's maid; it was impossible that she should have been either a free peasant or a citizen. I now examined her features more carefully; she appeared to be about thirty. Her face, though

pale and thin, still showed the remains of rare beauty. I loved above all the melancholy expression of her large eyes. Ermolaï was seated with his back towards me and busied himself in throwing dry twigs on the fire. The miller's wife said to him—

"At Jeltoukhina there has been a great mortality among the cattle again; father Ivan also has lost two fine cows . . God have pity on us!"

"Ah, and your pigs?"

"They are still alive and well."

"You will not give me a sucking pig, I suppose?" The miller's wife made no reply. After a minute's pause, she said, "Whom have you with you there?"

"A gentleman—a Monsieur Kostomarovski." Ermolaï threw into the fire a few withered pine branches; the dry twigs immediately crackled and a thick white smoke rose right into his face.

"Why did your husband refuse at first to let us in?"

"He was afraid."

"Afraid! the pot-bellied coward! afraid! Come now, my dear Arina Timoféevna, go, pray, and fetch me a drop of brandy. The miller's wife rose and disappeared in the darkness. Ermolaï sung,

> "The going so often my love to see,
> Has cost a good pair of boots to me. . . . ."

Arina re-appeared with a bottle and a glass. Ermolaï rose, and pouring out a glass, crossed himself, and tossed it off in a twinkling, and then added to his song the concluding word, *leoubleou!*—"I love." The miller's wife frowned, but perhaps was delighted for all that with this escapade, and seated herself again on the tub.

"What is the matter now, Arina? You have the look of a person dying of consumption, I declare."

"I suffer great pain."

"How so?"

"The cough is very painful, and deprives me of sleep."

"The gentleman seems to be asleep," muttered Ermolaï, after a minute's silence. "Listen, Arina: never have recourse to the doctor; it will only make your illness worse."

"Who would think of doctors?"

"Come and see me rather," (Arina hung her head). "I will give my old woman a pretty distant message for that day."

"Instead of talking such nonsense, Ermolaï Petrovitch, would it not be better to awake the gentleman? You see the potatoes are quite ready."

"So long as he does not snore, let him lie; it does'nt matter much," said my faithful attendant, very coolly. "He is fatigued, and sleeps; it is good."

I stirred, and Ermolaï, rising, came and said to me, "The potatoes are ready, salt is here; will you eat?"

I came out from under the shed; the miller's wife rose to leave; but, in order to detain her, I inquired—

"Is it long since you took this mill?"

"Two years, come Trinity."

"From what part does your husband come?" (Silence.)

"Where does your husband come from?" said Ermolaï, raising his voice.

"From Béelef. He is a citizen of Béelef."

"And you, are you too from Béelef?"

"No, I belonged to a proprietor. I was a serf."

"To whom did you belong?"

"To M. Zverkof. Now, I am a citizen and free."

"Were you not his wife's maid?"

"Yes, but how do you come to know that?"

I looked at Arina with great interest and curiosity.

"I knew your old master," I said.

"Ah! you knew him?" she replied in a low tone, and looked amazed.

It may be necessary now to tell my reader why I looked at Arina with such interest. At the time I was in St. Petersburg, I had, by accident, some intercourse with M. Zverkof. He filled a post of some importance, and passed for an able man, and one accustomed to business. He had a pompous, sentimental, complaining, wicked wife—a very ordinary creature, and extremely dull. This couple had a son, a true specimen of a little lordling, capricious, and very much prepossessed in his own favour. M. Zverkof's exterior did not predispose one to like him. A large square figure, pierced by two little mice-eyes of great brilliancy; a long, thin nose, terminating in large nostrils; gray hair *à la Titus*, and brushed down upon a wrinkled brow; thin and flexible lips, and a composed smile. Such is the aspect in which you first see M. Zverkof. He generally keeps his legs wide apart, and his great hands in his pockets. One day I happened to accompany him in his carriage to the country-house of a common acquaintance, and on our way we naturally entered into conversation. As a clever and sagacious man, he began to talk without anything having suggested his conversation, as if he had thought it incumbent on him to instruct me in the right way.

"Allow me," he said, "to observe, that you of the young generation talk about everything from an entirely false point of view. You should first of all study your own country. Russia is to you young men still a closed book, and yet you are always reading foreign ones. I would take, for example, the servants by

whom we are surrounded; you would say—good,—I do not contest it. But you do not know the people. I tell you, you are quite ignorant what a race—what a race"— (here he blew his nose with a tremendous noise, and took solemnly, and at equal intervals, four pinches of snuff.) "Well, yes, allow me, my dear sir, to tell you a little anecdote, which may perhaps interest you. You know my wife; you will agree that one could with difficulty find a little woman with more sweetness and sensibility. Her women have with her, I do not say a good life, but a very paradise. My wife, sir, has the principle of never keeping married servants in her house. The fact is, that when a girl is married she is no longer worth anything; children come, and this thing and the other thing. How indeed could you imagine that such a woman should hold herself at her mistress' service in every little thing, and that she should respect her habits and her wishes? She has no longer a head for service; she thinks on everything but her duties. One must judge kindly. Well, one day—it is long ago now—let me see—why, fifteen years ago—I like to be exact—we were passing through our village, and drew up before the elder's house; he approached. Before his house there stood a girl, a very pretty girl, in faith, and she had fair manners besides. My wife said to me, 'Coco'—you are aware that one sometimes has a little name of endearment in private—well, she said to me, 'Let us have that girl, and take her with us to St. Petersburg, Coco: I should like it.' I naturally reply, 'With pleasure—good, let us take her.' Our elder, very proud of the honour done him, fell at our feet; you may imagine he had never dreamt of such a piece of good fortune. The young girl, to be sure, wept and sobbed; but young people in the villages are so ill-mannered. Then, to be

sure, quitting the paternal roof so suddenly—ah, well, I daresay it is to some extent natural. You will grant that I speak with justice and propriety. Let us go on: the young girl was not long in taking to us; she got her place among the women, and everything was done to form her, and put her up to this and the other accomplishment. Could you believe it, she made such rapid, such surprising progress, that my wife quite doated on her, and ended by passing over several others, and making her lady's maid—attaching her to her own private person. Mark this well. And in faith it is only doing her justice to say that my wife never had so admirable a maid; serviceable, modest, obedient—in short, a little perfection. Accordingly, it is scarcely necessary to say that my wife made her all sorts of presents—a regular wardrobe, dessert from her master's table, tea, sugar—everything.

"This, sir, was the position she held with my wife for ten years. All of a sudden, one fine morning, without asking permission, Arina comes walking into my private room, and down she falls at my feet. That is a thing now which I cannot endure; a human being should never let down his dignity so much. 'My lord,' she said, 'Alexander Silitch . . a favour!' 'What favour?' I inquired. 'Allow me to marry.' I will confess to you that this did indeed astonish me. 'You know well enough, foolish girl, that Madame has no other lady's maid but you.' 'Yes, but I shall still wait on Madame.' 'Blockhead! Blockhead! Madame keeps no married servants.' 'Malania can take my place.' 'You dare to reason, eh?' 'It will be as you desire, but . . .' At these words I avow I was afraid of a stroke of apoplexy. Oh! I was so overpowered, for nothing on earth is so painful to a man as ingratitude. I do not require to inform you

that my wife is an angel of sensibility and goodness; I do believe that the blackest villain would be disarmed in her presence. I drove Arina from my presence, thinking, ah! she will regain her senses. As for myself, I have no wish to believe in wickedness—in black ingratitude. Five months had elapsed, I am quite sure it was so; the sixth month came, and, behold, she returns with the same supplications. . . . I then drove her out of my presence with serious indignation, and threatened to tell my wife all. Her conduct really hurt me.

"Just conceive, not long after this strange scene, my wife comes to me, but so agitated, so perturbed, that I was literally afraid of her. 'What has happened?' 'Arina is . . .' You understand, sir, what I mean; I would be ashamed to utter the word. 'Impossible; the wicked woman!' 'It is Petrouchka, the footman.'

"This was a blow to me. Consider my character—well, the fact is, I do not like half measures, I don't. Petrouchka had committed no great fault. One to be sure might punish the creature; but in truth he was not very culpable in my opinion. Arina—ah! that is another affair; there is more than enough to say about her. You may imagine that I immediately had her head shaved, made her dress in dark cloth, and banished her to the village. My wife lost an excellent maid; but you know one cannot permit disorganisation in one's household. If a limb has mortified, cut it off at once. Decide at once. You know my wife? An angel, is she not? She was attached to this creature, this Arina, who knew it well. And yet this girl did not blush to . . . Oh! she vexed me with her ingratitude; she wounded me deeply. Say what you please; in this race of people, in this class, do not seek for

delicacy of sentiment, expect nothing from them—nothing—nothing. You will in vain bring up a wolf at home; it will find out the forest some day. That will teach me. . . But I wished to prove to you that . . . ."

And M. Zverkof, without finishing his discourse, turned into his corner, and made a manly effort to control his agitation.

My reader will now understand why I looked with such interest at the miller's wife Arina.

"Is it long since you married this good man?" I asked her.

"Two years."

"Two years? M. Zverkof then gave you permission to do it?"

"I was purchased."

"By whom?"

"By Saveli Alexeitch."

"Who is he?"

"My husband."

Ermolaï smiled stealthily.

"Did M. Zverkof speak of me?" added Arina, after a moment's silence.

I knew only too well what to answer, but fortunately the miller called her, and she rose and ran to him.

"Has she a good husband in him?" I asked Ermolaï.

"Not very bad."

"They have children?"

"They had one, who is now dead."

"She must have taken this miller's fancy very much, since he freed her. Did he pay much?"

"I don't know. She reads and writes, and that is of importance in his trade. She must have pleased him very much, I daresay."

"You have known her long, I suppose?"

"Yes, I used to sell game to her master when he came to live on his property, which is not far from this."

"Did you know Petrouchka the footman?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"He is a soldier now."

"Ah!—This poor woman does not seem well."

"In health? no. . . We shall make a good *tiaga* six or seven hours hence, I expect. You ought to sleep soundly meanwhile."

A flock of wild ducks passed whizzing over our heads, and we heard them all alight in the river about thirty paces from us. It began to be at once dark and cold. In the forest the nightingale commenced to lavish its glorious treasure of melodies, and we betook ourselves with pleasure to the hay and to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

RASPBERRY WATER, OR THE RUSSIAN VELMOJ.

Up to the middle of August the heat is so insupportable, particularly from mid-day till three o'clock, that the keenest sportsman cannot go out to shoot; and even the dogs begin to hang at their master's heels, winking their eyes convulsively, and lolling out their tongues to a great length. When he turns and chides them, they humbly express their sorrow by a languid eye, and a gentle wag of the tail, but they still keep behind. I went out, however, on a day of this description to shoot. When out, I resisted for a long time the temptation to throw myself down somewhere under a tree, were it only for a quarter of an hour; and for a long time my indefatigable dog continued to poke among the bushes, although he evidently was prompted by nothing but his own feverish activity; the heat became at last so stifling that I was forced to betake myself somewhere for the preservation of the strength and energy that still remained.

I struck at once for the side of the Ista, scrambled down the bank, and having come to a belt of yellow sand at once firm and moist, I walked along this sheltered strip, which varied in breadth from about one to four yards, till I arrived at a spring-well, known throughout the district by the name of the Raspberry Water.

This spring bubbles forth from a fissure in the bank, and the constant flow of water has worn a deep straight channel, which extends to the river for about twenty paces, into which it falls, after forming a pretty brawling cascade. Some beautiful clumps of young oaks heighten the picturesqueness of the ravine, and round the spring itself grows a short velvet grass, intermixed with tufts of a coarser kind. The sun's rays struck fitfully on the cold crystal water. I climbed the slope, and gained a little plateau, inclined just as I wished. Upon the grass I found a dipper made of birchwood, left there by some good-natured peasant, and having quenched my thirst, stretched myself on the soft grass, and gazed about me.

Near a bay, formed at the fall by the rapid current, where I lay stretched at my ease, like some country river god, and which swarmed with small fry sporting in the stream, two old men, whom I had not noticed before, although passing ten paces from them, were seated with their backs to the ravine. The one, tall and stout, was dressed in a cafetan of a deep green colour, a cloth skull-cap, thickly padded, covered his head; he held a fishing line in his hand: the other, clad in a ragged coat, made of some kind of Bucharian cloth, his head bare, was holding a pot of worms, now and then covering his disordered hair with his hand, as if to screen himself from a stroke of the sun. I looked at the latter with attention, and was not long in remembering that he was called Stepan or Stéopouchka, from the village of Choumikhino.

Several versts from my house stands a large village, in the midst of which rises a church, built of stone, dedicated to the blessed Kozma and Damian. In front of this church, at a convenient distance, stood a spacious lordly mansion, flanked by a considerable number of

pavilions connected by galleries, temporary kitchens, stables, coach-houses, store-houses, and workshops of every kind, bath-houses, the apartments of the overseers and lackeys, green-houses and orangeries, see-saws and swings, and twenty other pretty things more or less useful, but always agreeable—except when repairs are going on, or when a fire breaks out. In the main body of the building lived a gentleman and his family. What good cheer! what abundance! what fêtes! This abode of pleasure unfortunately one fine morning fell a prey to the flames, and from the church-steps you saw nothing before you but a wide space covered with ashes and heaps of rubbish. The master set about preparing a temporary dwelling at some distance off, and the site of the former mansion was surrounded with a fence, and some time after turned into a good kitchen garden, embellished with the calcined ruins of the old buildings. Of some beams that had been saved from the fire, the marsh gardeners made a tolerable cottage, and in it dwelt the gardener Mitrophan, with his wife and seven children. Mitrophan was bound to supply his master with kitchen vegetables collected within a circuit of about ten miles. I happened to pass the night twice in the gardener's house, and sometimes also in passing had bought cucumbers of him, which were distinguished, even in summer, for their great size, their juiciness, and their thick yellow rind. It was in his house I first saw Stéopouchka.*

Every person has some relations, and a certain position in society; all servants receive wages, and have more or less money given them for their wants. Stephen never got anything from any body; he was related neither by blood nor marriage to any one, and no person seemed to trouble themselves how he gained a

* Diminutive for Stepan, *Stephen.*

livelihood. This man seemed to have behind him no past; nobody ever talked of him; I believe that he had not even been comprised in the census. One of my peasants fancied he had once heard a vague story that Stephen had at one time been in the service of some gentleman as a valet; and yet no one was able to say who his parents were, how he had fallen amongst the serfs of the lord of Choumikhino, or by what means he became possessed of that coat of Bucharian cloth, which had been seen on his shoulders from time immemorial. There was in the village an old centenarian, a man very unsociable, and of few words. I went to him, knowing that he was acquainted with the genealogy of every person in his master's retinue, even to the fourth generation; but all that he could remember was, that Stephen was the offspring of a Turkish woman, whom his late master Brigadier Alexis Romanitch had brought into the country with his baggage.

When great feast days came round—when, according to old customs, lordly generosity and feasting, cakes and brandy caused the faces of all the peasantry to glisten with pleasure—on these days even, Stéopouchka never appeared at the great tables loaded with eatables; he never ventured to greet the distributors, nor bring his hand to meet that of his master, while drinking at one draught, to the health and glory of his lord, a glass filled by the butler; he coveted nothing, and had nothing, unless some good soul in passing thrust into the poor devil's hand some miserable scrap of cake. Easter day is a holiday for everybody; all shake hands with one another. He was not passed over, because, after all, he had the appearance of a man; but he never thrust his hand out of his greasy sleeve, nor had he a red egg at the bottom of his basket, nor did he present with many bows his symbolic egg to his

young masters or their illustrious lady mother. He never took any of the liberties that were customary with others on that day.

He lived in summer in a large old hen-coop which lay at the back of the hen-house; in winter, in the entrance of the village bath-house; at the time of the severest frosts he stowed himself away in a hay loft. The repulsion which met him everywhere he was quite accustomed to; he was sometimes even kicked, but he never remonstrated, and he seemed in truth never in his life to have been able to open his mouth either to ask or to complain. After the fire, the poor wretch could vegetate nowhere but in the neighbourhood of the ruins, and in the enclosure where Mitrophan had taken up his abode. This man said to him, "You will live with me," but he said no more than "Nonsense." To stay with the gardener was above the ambition of Stéopouchka; he was quite content to live in the enclosure free from taunts and blows. He regulated his movements so as to be neither seen nor heard by anybody; he sneezed and coughed in his hand, and with an air of suspicion and terror. Really active, he went and came noiselessly, like the ant to get food—and only food; and in fact, had Stéopouchka not been engaged from morning to night seeking for it, he would have died of absolute want. At one time people would see him seated under a fence devouring a turnip, sucking and munching a carrot, or perhaps dividing into small pieces a withered cabbage he had picked up somewhere on the road; at other times he would be heard uttering a low whine while drawing a pail of water, when he would afterwards light a fire under his pot, draw some black substance or other out of his breast, and cast it into a wooden bowl. At times in his corner he would knock up something with

wood he found lying about, then drive in nails here and there, making perhaps a little shelf, and all this with as little noise as possible. You look about you—he has disappeared. Sometimes he is away for days, though nobody ever thinks about it, to be sure; then all at once you find him under the shelter of the fence, quietly engaged in packing shavings under an old iron trivet.

His face is small, and his eyes yellow; his hair, which has left the top of his head bare, flows down in profusion over his eyebrows and temples; he has a long sharp nose, ears long and transparent as those of a bat, and a beard of fifteen days' growth—never longer nor shorter. Such was Stéopouchka, whom I met on the banks of the Ista seated beside the other old man.

I accosted them, bid them good day, and took my seat beside them. In the companion of Stéopouchka I recognised a person likewise well known to me. He was a freedman of Count Peter Illitch B——; his name was Mickhaïlo Savelef; but he had received the nickname of Touman (the mist). Passengers on the great road to Orel can still see, close to the highway, at a little distance from Troïtsk, an enormous wooden house of two storeys, or rather the shell of a house, totally deserted, the roof in holes, and the shutters firmly closed. Even in broad daylight, under a brilliant sun, one cannot see a spectacle more melancholy than that which this ruin presents. Here, however, formerly dwelt the Count Peter Illitch, a rich great lord, but hearty and hospitable, with the manners of the last century. All the grandees of Orel met at his house; they made merry, feasted, and danced to their hearts' content, to the deafening thunder of his private orchestra, and amidst the flashing of rockets and Roman candles. It is probable that many an old

lady, while passing this melancholy memorial of her happy youth, sighs at the sad and sweet remembrance of these times gone by. There for many years the Count led a merry life; there he walked with a beaming countenance and a smile upon his lips, amidst crowds of friends and acquaintances, who looked upon him almost with adoration. Unfortunately his means, though immense, and quite inexhaustible, as he seems to have supposed, became quite insufficient for his household, and for a longer residence on his estate. Seeing himself utterly ruined, he went to St. Petersburg to seek an appointment, and died in a room in the hotel, without ever having found an opportunity of showing his administrative talents. Touman, who had been in his service in the time of his greatness, had received letters of enfranchisement from the count while alive. Touman, seated by me, with the line in his hand, was, although seventy years of age, still a good-looking man. He smiled almost continually, and very agreeably, such a smile as never greets one now, but was only to be seen in the time of Catherine—a frank open smile. While speaking, he opened and shut his lips slowly and neatly; there was a certain winning sweetness in his look. He blew his nose and took snuff with a certain composure, and whatever he did was done thoroughly and well . . . . "Well," said I to Touman, "have you caught any fish?"

"Have the goodness to look into the basket; two perches and five cabots . . . . Show them to the gentleman, Stéopa."

Stéopouchka handed me the basket.

"How are you, Stépan?" I asked.

"Eh! eh! p-p-pretty well," replied Stéopouchka, with a painful stutter; every word he uttered seemed to drag him to the ground.

"And Mitrophan?"

"We-we-well, s-s-sir."

The poor fellow turned away.

"He stutters fearfully," said Touman. . ."It is too hot for fishing; all the fish have now gone to sleep beneath the shadow of the willows. Hallo, Stéopa! a worm." Stéopouchka took a worm out of the pot, placed it in the hollow of his left hand, shook off the earth which fell from it, put it on the hook, spat on it, and presented it to Touman.

"Thank you, Stéopa. You are shooting, bârin,' resumed he, addressing me.

"So you see."

"Yes. The dog you have there, is he of English or Danish breed?" (The old man never omitted an occasion of showing that he had seen a little of the world.)

"I do not know of what breed he is, but he is a good one."

"And do you always take dogs with you?"

"Yes."

"Have you many?"

"I have two couples."

Touman smiled and shook his head. "Yes, that's it; there are some people who love dogs, and others who would not take the best as a gift. So far as the little sense I have helps me to see, I think that it is mainly for parade that one keeps dogs and horses, and packs of hounds; it is all for fashion and show. The late count, God rest his soul! was not, it is true, a sportsman, but he kept dogs, and twice a year he condescended to make a show of taking the field at a grand hunt. All the sportsmen assembled in the court in red coats edged with lace; the bugle sounded; his Excellency appeared. It was a pleasant,

a stirring sight. A horse is brought; his Excellency mounts; the first huntsman puts on his spurs for him, takes his cap off, places the bridle of his horse upon it, and hands it to his Excellency. He condescends to crack his whip; the huntsmen whistle on the pack, and all put themselves in motion. His equerry follows him at three paces' distance; he holds in his hands silken leashes, which are passed through the collars of two favourites of his master. Everything is done on a grand scale. The equerry is perched, you know, very high indeed, in a Cossack saddle; his cheeks are flushed; his keen eyes look everywhere; he heads the hunt. The balcony and door-steps are crowded with visitors. It is amusing; it is quite the thing; it is, one might say . . . Ah! the Asiatic!* he has escaped," added he, all at once drawing in his line.

"It appears that, as report goes, the count had a numerous retinue?"

The old man looked at me, and, before replying, spat upon his bait, and threw in his hook.

"He was a great lord—a true Velmoj.† There was a time when the grandees of St. Petersburg came, when passing, to view his splendour; and the highest nobility in the empire put on their stars and orders to appear at his table. He was a perfect master in the art of giving dinners. I remember well, he would call me and say, 'Touman, I want some live starlings for to-morrow. I want them. Tell my people to get them wherever they can. Do you hear?' 'I do, your Excellency.' Embroidered robes were brought all

* A strong, though not a vulgar expression, else Touman would not have used it.

† Velmoj (*lit.*, he who wishes, orders, and is powerful), a high and mighty Russian lord. Potemkin was the last survivor of the grand type of the Velmojes.

the way from Paris; perukes, canes, perfumes, eau de Cologne of the finest quality, snuff-boxes, and pictures as big as those oaks. If he gave a fête, ah! such fireworks, such walking up and down of lords and ladies, such riding parties in the parks and on the roads; such salutes of cannon too! Yes, yes. He had forty musicians in his private band. He had put over them a chief niemetz; but that fellow was too much of a niemetz. He wished to sit at table with his Excellency, and he insisted so strongly, that his Excellency sent him to dine at home. His Excellency said, 'My musicians have no need of a little black wand sawing in the air, that they never even look at; they can go on themselves without that.' That's true too, isn't it? Yes, if a Velmoj orders a thing, it must be. They would dance and keep it up till daylight; it was especially . . .

"Ha, ha, ha, there you are, caught at last, brother!" (And he drew out a small perch). "Take it, Stéopa."

"He was a bârin, a true bârin, a Velmoj," replied the old man, throwing in his line again; "and more than that, a good soul. He beat us; ah, yes! but the moment he turned his head, he had forgot all his anger. There is one thing—he kept mistresses, and, look you, they ruined him; he took them all from a low class. They were always asking the master for something, and what, do you think? whatever happened to cost most in the whole of Europe. Ay, ay, one may have his pleasure, and it is all well enough; that is quite right for a Velmoj—only a man shouldn't ruin himself. One of them was called Akoulina; the poor thing is now dead—rest her soul! She was one of a dozen daughters; her father was a deciatski* of Sitof. She was a wicked creature.

"She would slap his Excellency in the face—just

* A watchman who has charge of every ten houses.

imagine what irreverence! She had quite bewitched him, she had. I had a nephew whose face she shaved.* I will always say that these were the good times—the good old times!" added the old man, fetching a deep sigh.

We were silent for a few minutes. I replied, "I see, however, that your bârin must have been a severe master."

"It was the fashion of those times," replied Touman, shaking his head.

"Nobody does such things now-a-days?" added I, regarding him with attention.

He looked at me sideways, and said, "Yes, now, to be sure, things are—better."

And he threw his line farther in.

We were seated in the shade, and were not at all annoyed by the heat; in the sun it was unbearable. It was the dog-days; the heated countenance demanded air; there was not a single breath of wind to hope for. The sun darted his pitiless rays from a deep blue transparent vault, unspotted by a single cloud. Right before us, on the opposite bank of the river, was a field of yellow oats, with a few stalks of wormwood interspersed, and there, as on our side, not an ear, not a leaf stirred. Lower down, and nearer us, I saw a peasant's horse plunge into the water up to his belly, and shower the water over him with his tail. At times, twenty paces from us, beneath some bushes that overhung the river, might be seen a very pretty fish, whose breathing caused the air to mount in bubbles to the surface; then it would let itself sink to the bottom, causing a momentary swell in the water above him. The cricket crawled sluggishly among the brown grass;

* This is equivalent to making a soldier of him, as a punishment for some fault.

the quail chirped in spite of the heat; the goshawks hovered over the plain—often floating motionless in the air, by the rapid flutter of their wings, and with their tails spread out like a fan. Oppressed by the heat, we did not move a limb. All at once, behind us, in the ravine, we heard a noise of footsteps approaching the spring. I looked up, and saw a moujik of some fifty years of age, clad in a Russian smock-frock, birch-bark shoes, and with his armiak* hung over his shoulder.

The new comer was covered with dust from head to foot, and seemed evidently oppressed with fatigue. He sat down near the spring, drank of the water with relish, and then rose.

"Hallo, Vlass!" cried Touman, who recognised him at the first glance, "good day, brother. Where have you fallen from, eh?"

"Good-day, Mickhaïlo Savelitch,"† replied the peasant, approaching him. "I come from a distance."

"And where have you been, then?" said Touman.

"At Moscow, to find the bârin."

"Why?"

"To ask a great favour of him."

"What favour, pray?"

"To reduce my yearly tribute by two-thirds or a half, or place me at statute work instead. My boy is dead, and I will never be able to pay without help."

"Your son is dead?"

"Dead. . . . Poor boy! at Moscow, where he was a car-driver; and I must confess he paid the tribute for me."

"You've been put in that class, have you?"

"Yes."

"Well! your master?"—

* A coat made of coarse camlet cloth.

† Touman's real name.

"The master? the master?—he drove me away, and said—'How dare you come to me? Why have I a steward on my estates down there? Your duty is to address yourself first to him. You speak of statute work: Pay me first what you owe me.' He was in a great rage."

"Have you come back, then?"

"Yes; I wished first to know whether my son might not have left some property or money. I went to inquire of his patron.—'I am Vlass, the father of Philip.' 'You say so,' said he, 'but how do I know that? Besides, your son has left nothing, nothing; and besides that, there is his debt to me.' I then quitted Moscow."

The peasant told us all this with as much coolness as if he had been speaking of a stranger, but the water stood in his little bloodshot eyes, and his lip quivered.

"You are going home now?" said Touman.

"Where should I go to? my wife's there at home gnawing her hand for hunger—dying of hunger."

"You ou-ou-ou-ought," stammered Stéopouchka; but feeling nervous at the story, he kept quiet, and began to rummage in the pot for a worm, to keep himself in countenance.

"Will you go to the steward?" said Touman, observing with some astonishment the calmness and composure of the peasant.

"What! go to him? I am in debt, and have not paid. My boy, before he died, was a long time ill, and did not even pay his own tribute. Bah! that's no great matter; one can't get water out of a stone.—"

He spoke as if the steward were there, and as if he had him in his mind's eye. "Bother yourself as much as you like, brother. Well, what of it; my head is a sorry pledge, and I have only that" . . . . He smiled in a singular manner and continued, "You may puzzle

your brains about it as much as you please, Kintilian Samenitch; that's the way of it." . . . . He smiled again.

"Ah! brother Vlass, it is . . . a bad business, Yes . . . bad," muttered Touman.

"How is it so bad? let him go to . . ." Vlass stopped, and resumed, "Ah, it's very hot," and he wiped his face with his sleeve.

"Who is your lord?" asked I of the peasant.

"Count B—— Valerian Pétrovitch."

"Son of the Count Peter Illitch?"

"Yes, son of Count Peter," replied Touman. "The late Count Peter Illitch, in his lifetime, had detached, for his son, a village from his estate called Wllassof. Count Valerian, is he well?" said he to Vlass.

"He is in very good health, God be thanked," replied Vlass. "He has got so ruddy . . and he has grown so very stout too."

"Look you, sir," said Touman, addressing himself to me in a low voice, "its all very well for the peasants on the estates round Moscow to be obliged to pay tribute, but in our districts how is it to be raised?"

"How much has the land tax been fixed at?" said I aloud.

"At ninety-five roubles," muttered Vlass.

"Ah, well! consider, bârin; at Wllassof the land is worth little or nothing; it is only from the wood that the lord makes anything."

"The people say everywhere that the forest is sold," replied the moujik, who had overheard the last words of Touman.

"Yes, you see. . . Stéopa, a worm. Are you sleeping?"

Stéopouchka shook himself a little. The peasant seated himself beside us. We were all equally pensive

and silent. Upon the bank below, a man was singing a song; but these Russian songs are so melancholy. . . . . The song of the unknown damped the spirits of our poor Vlass.

Half an hour after, I took a hearty draught of the water of the spring, and each of us wended his way homeward.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR.

One day, returning from shooting in a distant part of the country, I caught a severe cold. Luckily the fever seized me in the inn of the district town, and I sent for a physician. Half an hour after, the doctor appeared—a little dark man, of a somewhat shabby appearance. He prescribed a sudorific and a mustard blister, and pocketed with great alacrity the blue bank note* that I handed him. I saw he was an odd fellow; he had a dry short cough, and his eyes stared in a vague way at the wall, never meeting mine. He was going to leave, when he let fall a few words in his negligent way, and waited for some reply to his remark. I was restless with fever; I knew very well that I should not sleep, and wished for nothing better than to talk a little with this excellent fellow. Tea was brought in. The doctor launched at once into conversation. He was far from being a stupid fellow. On the contrary, it was a pleasure to hear him speaking, he expressed himself so precisely. One meets with many curious things in the world; you will find one man whom you believe to be your friend, with whom you

* In Russia the colour of paper money varies with its value; a bank note for five roubles is blue. A rouble is worth about one shilling.

have lived for a long time, and yet you have never come to talk together in a frank and cordial way; you may meet another who will open to you his whole heart before you have known him twenty minutes. The one who has a love of talking shows you all the secrets of his bosom, without being able to tell how he could possibly come to be so indiscreet. I had certainly neither called forth nor deserved the confidence of my new friend. I do not know whether he took this way of diverting my attention from the fever that was agitating me; I rather think that he was glad to seize this occasion of disburthening his mind of a number of personal adventures which he had hitherto carefully concealed; however it was, he certainly succeeded in interesting me in the recital of some scenes he had witnessed in the course of his practice. For my own part, I cannot see any reason why I should not make my reader a partner in my pleasure; and perhaps it may not be inconvenient to let the doctor speak for himself.

"You don't know," he began, in a feeble and trembling voice (I have remarked that this is the effect of the use of Berezovski* snuff, when not mixed with a snuff less strong and pungent); "you don't know the judge of this district, Paul Loutitch Milof?"

"No."

"Well, no matter;" (the doctor coughed and rubbed his eyes). "It was in Lent, just about the middle of the spring-thaw. I was sitting with the judge in the evening; we were busy at our usual game of preference.† All of a sudden," (my friend the doctor was very fond of the phrase, *all of a sudden*) "the servant opened the door: 'Here is a man who wishes to see you.' . . 'What does he want?' . . 'He has a letter for you, about some

* Snuff made of tobacco grown at Berezov, very pungent.

† A game of cards much in vogue in Russia.

sick person, I suppose.' The servant brought in the letter. I opened it; it was just as I thought. 'Very good, very good,' I said to the man. . . Ah! but you see, it is what I get my living by. . . The letter was from a lady, a widow, informing me that her daughter was dangerously ill, and begging me, in the name of God and all the saints, to come to her immediately; adding that she had sent a carriage to convey me to her house. Good; but it was about twenty versts from this; the night was dark as pitch; the roads—bad enough in good weather—are terribly broken up in the time of thaw. A very poor woman too, judging from the paper and the seal. It couldn't be more than two roubles, and perhaps not even that—perhaps a small piece of cloth, or a little oatmeal. Never mind; you understand, duty is above all these considerations. Some poor soul is dying; I get a letter begging me to come, and I refuse to go! No, no; that I could never do. I gave my cards to Kalliopin—he is a fellow always to be found lounging about the judge's house, and ran to my lodgings. When I reached the house, I saw standing before the steps an ugly little telejka, and harnessed to it two misshapen paunchy horses, with skins very like an old felt hat. The coachman sat stiff and immovable in his seat, with his hat in his hand, out of respect for me. 'Ah! friend,' I thought, 'I see very well that your masters are not overburdened with this world's goods.' You smile, sir? Well, you are right; but you know we poor devils must take everything into consideration—everything is a symptom; and when the coachman who is sent to us sits square on his seat, and bolt upright like a prince, keeps his hat on his head; nods to you, and cracks his whip in a free, independent style, I say to myself, 'I am sure of a bank-note at least.' But in this case, I could neither see notes nor

silver—nothing but copper or butter. Well, duty before everything.

"I provided myself with all the medicines indispensable in such conjunctures, and set off. I did not reach the place without some trouble, I assure you; an infernal road—the brooks had grown into rivers—large ponds formed by the melted snow to go through—dreadful ruts—and, to crown all, a bank had broken down, the country round was inundated, and not a single mark to help us to distinguish the road. Well, I arrived at length at a low thatched house; the windows were lighted; that was the place; the people were waiting for us. A respectable old woman in a cap came to the door: 'Come, and save her; she is dying!' . . 'Do not be agitated; be calm,' said I—'Where is the patient?' 'This way, if you please.' I looked about me. I was in a very neat little room; a lamp was burning on a bracket in the corner, before the image of the Saviour. On the bed lay a young lady of about twenty years of age, quite insensible, and hardly breathing; a strong fever was raging in her veins. Near the head of the bed stood two other young ladies, weeping and terrified. The elder said to me, 'Yesterday she was quite well, all day she had an excellent appetite; this morning she complained of a slight headache, and suddenly this evening she fell ill, and you see in what a dreadful state she is now.' I said to her too, 'Be calm; don't be agitated, my dear young lady.' Well, sir, you smile; but a doctor must talk in that way. I examined my patient, bled her, applied mustard-blisters, and prescribed a decoction.

"I looked at her attentively. Ah, Heaven! what a beautiful girl! I had never seen such beauty. Beautiful! I say, very beautiful! . . I was struck with profound pity. . . What a face! What eyes! Well,

thank God, she was becoming quieter; she perspired profusely; she smiled, passed her hand over her face. Her sisters bent over her, and asked her how she felt; she answered that she had no pain. She then turned towards the wall; I watched her; hush! she fell asleep. 'Just what she needs,' I said; 'let us leave the room quietly, and let the servant watch her.' We went out of the chamber as quietly as possible. In the parlour, I remarked with pleasure, beside the tea-kettle that was singing on the table, a pretty little bottle of rum. Pardon me, sir; but you understand in our profession one needs something to keep one's heart up.

"After tea, I was entreated to pass the night there. I had no wish to refuse. You may imagine I was not very anxious to go over that horrible road once more. The old lady never ceased sobbing and groaning. 'What is the matter? I tell you she will live. Don't be anxious; go to bed; it is past one o'clock. If nothing goes wrong, you may have four hours in bed.' 'You will call me if anything happens?' 'Certainly I shall do so; take away the girls.' The old lady went to bed; the young ladies, too, retired to their chamber. A bed was made up for me in the parlour. I lay down, but I could not sleep. I can't tell what tormented me, but I could not get my patient out of my thoughts. I could bear it no longer; I rose at once. I thought, I must go and see the patient; the woman that is sitting with her may——God knows!'

"The room where the sick young lady lay was next the parlour. I opened the door quietly; it was strange; my heart was palpitating strongly. I looked first for the servant; she was sitting in an arm chair about a yard from the bed, sleeping with her mouth open, and even snoring—the stupid animal! The sick girl had turned again; I thought I saw her making signs; I

looked again, she was moving her fingers in a curious way. I bent over the bed to listen to the breathing of the poor girl, when all of a sudden she opened her eyes, seized me, and cried out, 'Who are you, who are you?' I was stupified for a moment. 'Don't be afraid, my dear girl,' I said; 'I am the doctor; I have come to see how you are.'..'You are the doctor?'..'Yes, yes, I am your doctor; your mother sent for me to the town; we have bled you, and now you must try and get a little sleep, and in two or three days we shall have you quite well again.'—'What is that you are saying? go away.' Ah! thought I, the fever is still upon her; and I felt her pulse. It was so. She stared at me, then suddenly seized my arm. 'I am going to tell you why I do not wish to die; I am going to tell you immediately. We are alone; not a word, I beg; you hear me?—listen.'

"Here was an awkward and very painful situation; she put her arm round my neck, her lips almost touched my ear, her hair floated upon my cheek. I declare to you I began to lose my presence of mind. She muttered something, I could not understand a word; at last it occurred to me—'She is wandering, she is wandering.' She still muttered very fast—the words were not Russian. Just imagine the scene. She ceased, shuddered; her head fell back on the pillow, and, threatening me with her fore-finger, she said, 'Beware, doctor, no one must know—no one!' I calmed her with signs of consent, and some words which fell from me unconsciously; I made her drink a potion, awoke the stupid servant-maid who was set to watch, and left the room."

The doctor paused, took pinch after pinch of snuff, as if he were in a rage, and remained for a moment silent and absorbed.

"The next day the patient, contrary to my expectations, was no better. Twenty times I thought of ordering the carriage and leaving; it was necessary to go, but how could I leave her? I resolved to remain, although I had patients in the town that were expecting me; and you know, one ought not—one cannot neglect one's patients; you run the risk of losing your practice. But, *primo*, the poor young lady was in a desperate state; *secundo*, to speak the truth, I felt a lively interest in my patient, besides, the whole family pleased me. They were people not in very good circumstances, but very well educated—much more cultivated than people of their class generally are in our part of the country. The father had been a learned man; lived by his writings; of course he died in poverty, but he had been wise enough to give his children a good education, and had left them a library. Was it this that made me feel so much interest for my patient? Was there any other reason? One thing I must say—in the house, I was treated with great affection, just like a near relative.

"Meantime, the weather became worse and worse; communication with the town was almost impossible, and it required the greatest exertions to procure medicines. The patient was not getting better. Day followed day. But—then—" The doctor stopped, then continued: "I don't know how to explain it." He had recourse to his snuff-box, took pinch after pinch, swallowed hastily a mouthful of tea, and resumed: "I shall tell you all about it without any evasion: my patient took it into her head to—to love me, shall I say? no, not love, no; well, I can't say what it was." The doctor was silent for a moment, and blushed. "No, no!" he continued; "what a fool I am! come, come, I must not forget myself. She was a young lady

of good birth, clever, well educated, cultivated, and I, poor I, was losing every day the little Latin I once had. As regards my appearance" (the doctor looked at himself smiling), "I think I have no great reason to be conceited about it. But Heaven has not made me altogether stupid; I don't call white black, and I can understand things pretty well. Well, I saw very plainly that Alexandra—her name was Alexandra Andréevna—that Alexandra was not precisely in love with me, but she was my friend. Never mind, perhaps she did not understand herself what she felt; I will not say that she did not; but her position, her rank in life, —you understand; do you understand me?" added the doctor, who poured forth all this with extraordinary volubility, without stopping to take breath, and just as if he had a fever himself. "Well, I think I must have been out of my senses. How well you have understood me! Allow me, I shall tell you everything in a plain logical way."

He finished his cup of tea, and continued in a tone that showed a little more reserve: "Yes, it was so. My poor patient went from bad to worse. You are not a doctor, my dear sir, and you can hardly have an exact idea of what passes in the mind of a physician, especially when he begins to see that the disease is stronger than himself. What becomes then of his confidence in his ability? He is embarrassed, timid in the extreme; he seems to have forgotten all he knows, and to have lost all his skill; it seems to him that the patient has no longer any confidence in him, and that the family begin to remark his humiliating situation. He believes that they do not think it worth the trouble to inform him of any symptoms that may have appeared in his absence—that they look at him askance—that they are whispering about his bill. Oh! it is

horrible! He thinks: 'There must be a medicine for this disease; the only thing is to find it. Will not this do?' . . He tries it. No, that is not the proper remedy, he sees, and hastens to arrest the effects of it; he tries some other, then another. He turns over all his medical books; he stops at twenty contradictory indications; rejects them one after the other. He returns to one, to another—in the meantime the patient is dying. An idea! Another doctor will perhaps save her! A consultation, he says to himself—I must have a consultation; I must reflect on my responsibility. Ah! how silly he looks on such occasions! But we send for another physician. The patient dies; it is not the doctor's fault; he has followed the rules of the profession. Or perhaps—and this is the most cruel situation of all—the doctor sees that the family have the blindest confidence in him, and at the same time he feels that death is present, and that he can do nothing. And this was just the case with Alexandra and her excellent family. They thought that, by keeping me with them, danger was kept at a distance. I had very easily made them believe that there was nothing to fear, while I was myself a prey to the most painful anxiety. To crown all these miseries, it was no longer possible to escape; the weather was frightful, and my confusion and embarrassment more frightful still. The coachman passed all his time in the rain on the muddy roads; he required four-and-twenty hours to go to the town for medicines and to return.

"That was not all. Now, I never left the patient's room; there was no means of prevailing upon me to leave the chamber; and what did I do there? I smiled with a sore, sad heart, I told her stories, I played at cards with the dying girl. I passed the nights in an arm-chair; this gave so much pleasure to the mother,

that she never ceased thanking me with the tears in her eyes; while I thought, 'I deserve your thanks very little, poor woman!' I must tell you, besides—and why should I hide it after all I have said?—I was in love with my patient. Alexandra was so remarkably attached to me; she at last would not suffer any other person to enter her chamber; she did not wish any one beside her but me—me always. She questioned me about many things, she wished to know where I had studied, what was my mode of life, my habits, about my relations, who were my friends and acquaintances. I did not think that it was right to hold any conversation with her; I felt that she ought not to speak, not to think about anything. Well, I could not deny her anything; it seemed to me she would have been hurt by my opposition. When she turned aside her face, there were moments when I grasped my head between my hands, and said to myself,—'What are you doing, you scoundrel!' She would take my hand, look in my face for a long time—a very long time—and then sigh and say, 'How good you are!' Her hands were burning, her eyes were heavy and encircled with a dark ring. 'Yes,' she would continue, 'you are a good, an excellent man; you are not at all like our neighbours; no, no, you are very different from those people! How is it that I did not know you before?' . . 'Alexandra Andréevna, calm yourself,' I would say; 'I am very sensible of your kindness and your friendship, but you must be calm, and everything will go well, and you will get better again.'

"I ought to tell you," added the doctor, leaning towards me and opening his eyes very wide, "that these ladies saw very little of their neighbours; those who were as poor as themselves were very bad company, and the others—the rich—their pride would not allow

them to associate with them. I told you they were a very honourable family, and their regard for me flattered my self-esteem. Alexandra would not take her potions from any other hand than mine; she took the spoon, or the cup, or the glass, leaning on my arm. She would swallow the draught with her eyes fixed upon me as if to see whether I was satisfied with her. Satisfied! my heart was breaking.

"In the meantime, she was becoming rapidly worse, and I saw too well that she must very soon die. Will you believe me? I would have gone to the grave in her stead; *there* were her mother and sisters devouring me with their eyes; I lost all my self-confidence. 'How is she now?' . . 'Eh, pretty well' . . *Pretty well!* my head swam; I wished to sink into the ground. One night I was sitting alone with the patient—I may say alone, though the servant was in the room, but she was asleep, snoring like any four men; one could not find fault with her for that; she too had had her troubles, poor girl. Alexandra Andréevna had been very ill the whole evening, the fever had been violent. Till midnight she had not had a moment's rest; at midnight she fell asleep, at least she lay without motion. The lamp was burning dimly before the holy image. My head bent forward, and I could not help dozing a little. All of a sudden something struck me, and I turned my head to the side from which the blow seemed to come. Before me was Alexandra, her large eyes fixed upon me, her mouth open, her cheeks inflamed. 'What is the matter with you?' . . 'Doctor, I must die soon, must I not?' . . 'What is that you are saying?' . . 'No, doctor, no; pray, don't tell me that I may still live—don't say that; if you knew . . Listen to me, and for the love of God, do not hide from me my true situation.'

"She went on in this hurried talk: 'If I am quite

sure that I must indeed die, I shall tell you everything—everything I feel here. Listen, I have not been sleeping, I have been looking at you for a long, long hour. In the name of God—I will believe you; you are a good and sincere man. I adjure you by all that is sacred to tell me the truth; you cannot understand how important it is for me to know it. Come, now, doctor, tell me frankly that I am in danger, eh?' . . 'Why do you wish to make me say that?' . . 'I beg you in Heaven's name.' . . 'Well, I cannot deny that there is some little danger, Alexandra Andréevna; but God is good, and' . . 'I shall die, I shall die!' And her figure expanded, her face glowed, she became glad, even gay—a gaiety that was very terrible. . . 'Do not be alarmed, I have no fear of death.' . . She raised herself a little, leaned on her left arm, and continued: 'It is well, now—now I can tell you how grateful I feel to you—now, I can say to you that you are a good man—a very good man, and that I love you.' I looked at her with a stupid air. 'I love you, do you hear me? I love you.'—'Alexandra Andréevna, how can I have deserved it?'—'You don't understand me—don't you understand me?' And all of a sudden she fell upon my neck and smothered me with kisses. I was just going to cry out; I slipped upon my knees, but my head remained between her hands on the pillow. She was silent, her fingers worked among my hair; I listened, she was weeping. I said some words to her—I should find it difficult to remember what I said; but, along with the words—'I thank you—believe me—be calm,' I remember I insisted on the servant being awakened. 'Eh! what care I for any one except you? Call her, let her come, let her hear and see; I care not, I am going to die. You are afraid, you are trembling; why? Raise your head, be firm——or, perhaps, you do not love me; I have been deceiving

myself. Ah! good God, can it be true?—if it is, pardon me. Then let me die, ah! quickly, quickly.' 'What do you say, Alexandra Andréevna? I—not love you? I do love you, my dear Alexandra.'

"When I had uttered these words, which I believed to be dictated by the highest prudence, she sighed deeply, and looking tenderly at me, she opened her arms and cried: 'Well then, come, embrace me.' I perceived that my poor patient was delirious; I understood well, that if this dear young lady had not been dying, she would never have thought of—of me; and, think of it as you may, it is a very hard thing for a young person of her sex, twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, to die without ever having loved. That was what was hanging at her heart, that was why Alexandra, in her last despair, attached herself to me. Do you understand now? . . . She would not suffer me to leave her arms. 'Have pity on me, have pity on yourself,' I did not cease saying. 'Why these precautions and all this pity, since I am going to die—since I *must* die? Ah! if I knew that I must remain among the living, and perhaps appear some day among young ladies of good family, I should have cause to blush—great cause to blush at what I am doing; but now' . . . . 'But who assures you—who has told you that you must die?' 'Ah! you will not deceive me, my friend; you cannot tell a falsehood, you cannot do that; you know I must die.' . . 'You will live, Alexandra; I shall cure you. We shall go together and ask your mother for her blessing; we shall be united in marriage, and we shall be happy.' . . 'No, no, you have given me your word; I must die; you have told me so yourself.'

"Ah! sir, that was a cruel stroke—a very cruel stroke in many respects. Just imagine for a moment what odd things may happen to a man! Now, this is

a miserably small affair, and yet painful to the person who has to experience it. Alexandra took it into her head to ask my Christian name, and I have the distinguished misfortune of being called Trifon. Heavens! yes, my name is Trifon Ivanovitch. What was I to do? At first I answered, that at home and in the town it was the custom to call me the Doctor; but she insisted that I must have a baptismal name, so I was obliged to say, 'My name is Trifon, Miss.' She pouted at this word, shook her head, and muttered something in French. That was not a good symptom. Then she fell a-laughing. That was no better. Think, sir, what a night of horrors I passed with my patient. In the morning I left the chamber, feeling like a criminal —an incendiary. I breakfasted. It was broad daylight when I returned to the bedside of the patient. God of heaven, I hardly knew her! I have seen dead people look better. On my honour, I really cannot understand how I was able to support this torture. Three days more the patient suffered intermittent attacks of severe pain. What nights especially! what nights! and how she talked to me. The last night, imagine it—I was seated at her pillow, begging God to grant one thing, that he would take her to himself quickly, and me along with her. The mother entered the chamber. I must tell you that I had said in the evening to the poor woman, that I had so little hope, I thought she had better send for the priest. The sick girl,' immediately on seeing her mother, cried out, 'Ah! you have come at the right time to see your children. Look on us; we love each other; we have given our word to each other.' . . 'What does she say, Doctor, what does she say?' . . 'She is wandering; it is the delirium,' said I, more dead than alive, and in a choking voice. 'Come, come,' said the poor girl, 'you

said something very different a moment ago, and you have taken my ring. Why deceive? My mother is goodness itself. She pardons—she understands everything. For me, I am dying; I have no interest to deceive. My friend, give me your hand.' I darted into the parlour at one bound. The mother, of course, divined all.

"I shan't tire you much longer with my sad story; it is not so very agreeable to myself to go over all these cruel details once more. My patient died next day," said the doctor in a voice broken with sobs. "Before she expired, she begged her relatives to leave her alone with me for a little. 'I beg you to pardon me,' she said. 'It may be that I have acted very wrong—you will ascribe it to delirium; but be assured that I never loved any one as I loved you. Do not forget me. Take care of my ring.'"

The doctor turned away. I took his hand and pressed it.

"There!" he said . . "let us talk about something else; or perhaps you would rather like a short game at preference? We poor people can hardly allow ourselves to cherish such exalted sentiments. We must take care of one thing only, if we wish to live in peace; if we don't want to hear the children crying, and their lady-mother scolding. You will, of course, understand that, since the time I have been telling you about, I have found time and courage to marry for good, as people say. Yes, yes! I married a merchant's daughter—seven thousand roubles of dowry. Her name is Akoulina, and so there is no inconvenience in my being called Trifon. Trifon is as good as Akoulina. Between you and me, she is a shockingly bad wife; but there is one consolation, she sleeps all day. Well! our game?"

We played several games of preference for very moderate stakes—a kopeck* a point. Trifon Ivanovitch won from me about two roubles and a half, and left me a little late, but highly delighted with his victory.

* About the one-tenth of our penny.

CHAPTER V.

MY NEIGHBOUR RADILOFF.

In autumn, snipes are frequently to be found in the old gardens among the lime-trees, that are commonly planted in alleys. We have many such gardens in the government of Orel. Our forefathers, when selecting a proper situation for a dwelling-house, never failed to portion off a piece of good ground of the size of two acres for their orchard and the alleys of sacramental lime-trees. At the end of fifty, or at most seventy years, these enclosures—these mansions—these gentlemen's nests, have disappeared from the face of the earth. The rotten buildings are sold, taken down, and carted off; those parts that are built of brick become heaps of rubbish, and the old fences of every sort vanish, piece by piece, nobody knows how. The limes alone continue to grow and to prosper, and now surrounded by cultivated fields, they serve to remind this stupid generation of their fathers and brothers that have made merry or reposed under their shade. This grand secular lime is a beautiful tree; it is tended by the Russian peasant, and his unpitying axe spares its venerable age. Its leaf is not large, but it stretches out on all sides so vast a number of leafy branches, that there is always a sweet impenetrable shade to be found under this tree.

One day as I was wandering with Ermolaï across the fields in search of partridges, I saw on my right a deserted garden, and I immediately turned aside in the direction of it. I had hardly crossed the border of the low thicket, when a snipe rose; I fired, and at the same instant I heard a cry of alarm, from some one not far off; the terrified figure of a girl appeared through the trees, and immediately vanished. Ermolaï came running up to me: "You must not shoot here," said he; "some one still lives on the property."

I was just about to answer, and my dog, which was coming to me with an air of dignity, had not time to deliver the bird, before I heard the sound of hurried steps, and a tall man with stiff, straight moustaches came out of the thicket, and stopped before me with a dissatisfied air. I made the best excuses I could, and offered him the bird I had killed on his grounds.

"Very well," said he, smiling, "I shall take the game, but on one condition—and that is, that you come and dine with me to-day."

I was far from being delighted with this proposal; it would spoil my day's sport; but there was no way of excusing myself.

"My name is Radiloff, I have some property in this district. I am your neighbour too; perhaps my name may not be entirely new to you. To-day is Sunday, and I suppose my people have a passable dinner ready at home; were I not pretty sure of that, I should hardly dare to invite you on chance in this way."

I answered as people commonly answer in such cases, and accompanied him. A walk newly weeded, sanded, and gravelled, conducted us in a few minutes out of the lime grove; we came out into the kitchen garden. Here old apple trees and gooseberry bushes first struck the eye; then, in irregular plots, rows of

cabbages of a tender green; beyond, rows of long poles were covered by the climbing spirals of a vigorous bushy hop; all along the hedge, tall nettles—as useless and inconvenient as they were ambitious—rose in thick intertwisted shoots. In two or three places you might see clustering groups of honeysuckle, elder tree, and the common rose—the remains of old and larger trees. Near a little fish-pond, filled with thick viscous reddish water, one could observe, almost on a level with the ground, the dilapidated border of a well, surrounded with little pools of water; in these the ducks were enjoying themselves to their hearts' content; a dog, trembling all over and winking hard, was gnawing a bone in a piece of ground covered with creeping plants, where, too, a red and white cow was lazily feeding, now and then whisking its tail over its lean ridgy back. We turned to the left; between some birch and hazel trees, I saw before us an old little grey house roofed with planks, fronted by a porch very much the worse for the weather, and all awry. Radiloff stopped.

"Ah! but," said he with a good humoured smile, and looking me straight in the face, "it just occurs to me that perhaps you don't care much to come and dine with me; if you——"

I did not allow him to finish what he was going to say, and assured him that, on the contrary, I should be delighted.

"Very well, it is your own wish now." We entered. A boy in a long cafetan of coarse blue cloth opened the door. Radiloff ordered him immediately to give Ermolaï a good glass of brandy; my servant bowed respectfully to the host, and seated himself on the bench which lined the inside of the large porch.

From the antechamber, the walls of which were

covered with rude carvings, while from the roof hung two cages, we entered a little room which served M. Radîloff as a study. I left here my sporting accoutrements, and placed my gun in a corner, while the boy brushed me with great diligence.

"There, now, let us go to the drawing-room," said Radîloff, "and allow me to present you to my mother."

I followed him. On the sofa was seated a little old lady, in a brown bonnet and dress; she had, with a thin lean face, and a sad and timid look, a certain air of kindness in her manner. Radîloff introduced me as a neighbouring landed proprietor. The lady rose and bowed without laying down an ugly ridiculous thing made of camel's hair that she had in her withered hand, in the form of a bag or a basket.

"Have you been long in this part of the country?" she said, in a feeble and broken voice, winking her eyes rapidly.

"No, madam, only a few weeks."

"And you mean to stay here?"

"Till winter, I think."

The old lady said no more.

"Hallo!" resumed Radîloff, pointing to a tall lean man whom I had not noticed when I entered the drawing-room, "here is Fédor Mikhéitch. Come Fédia, give the gentleman a specimen of your talents. What are you skulking there in a corner for—a man of your abilities?"

The man to whom these words were addressed immediately rose, took up a very bad violin, seized the bow by the middle with the upper end downwards; set the instrument against his chest, and, shutting his eyes, began to sing and dance in a grotesque manner to an accompaniment of the most painful scraping. He seemed about seventy years of age; he had on a long

surtout of grey nankin that waved sadly on his long bony limbs. This poor devil began to dance; sometimes he tripped about in a lively manner; sometimes, with the appearance of a man that was dying, he loosely balanced his little bald head, then suddenly threw it back, displaying the veins in his neck unnaturally distended, and jerked his limbs in all directions without moving from the spot. It was easy to see that certain movements of his legs were very painful to him. His toothless mouth grinned at times with a smile, not of merriment, but of pain. Radîloff could easily perceive, by the expression of my countenance, that this display of the talents of Fédia was anything but agreeable to me.

"That will do, old fellow, that will do," said my host; "now go and make them give you your *reward*."

Fédor Mikhéitch instantly set the violin in its place at the window, bowed to the lady, then to me, then to Radîloff, and left the room.

"He was once a landed gentleman," resumed my friend; "he was rich, and ruined himself; he now stays with us. In his time, he passed for the most redoubtable dandy in the whole district; he ran away with two married women; he kept singers, and he was everywhere looked up to as an authority on music and dancing. But take a glass of brandy; you see dinner is on the table."

A young lady, the same whom I had frightened in the thicket, and who had disappeared among the lindens, entered the drawing-room at this moment.

"And here is Olga! allow me to introduce you. Come now, to dinner, if you please."

We entered the dining-room. While going down, and when taking our places at table, Fédor Mikhéitch, who had received his reward, and had his

eyes inflamed, and his nose red in consequence, sang "*Sound out, victorious thunders!*" A cover had been set for him on a table without a cloth, in a corner of the room. The poor old man had entirely forgotten the commonest rules of propriety in his way of eating; and on these occasions especially, he had to be kept at a certain distance from good company. He crossed himself, drew a long breath, and then set to work on his dinner like a shark. The dinner was really well got up, and being a Sunday dinner, had its jellies, and its puff-pancakes, which are called in this part of the country *vents d'Espagne*.

Radîloff, who had been ten years in an infantry regiment in the line, and had served a campaign in Turkey, immediately broke into a labyrinth of military anecdotes. I listened with all the attention that politeness requires, and in the meantime regarded Olga with stolen glances. She was not very pretty; but the air of calm resolution on her countenance, her broad and smooth white forehead, very thick hair, above all, her brown eyes, small but lively, clear, and full of intelligence, would have struck any other man just as they struck me. She seemed to hang upon every word of Radîloff's; it was not attention, but an impassioned interest that shone from every feature. Radîloff was old enough to have been her father; he employed the *thou* in addressing her. But I guessed from the first that she was not his daughter. In the course of conversation, he happened to mention his late wife, "who was her sister," he added, pointing to Olga. She blushed and cast down her eyes. Radîloff was silent and changed the subject. The old lady did not utter a word during the whole of dinner, hardly ate anything, and paid not the slightest attention to me at table. Her features bore an expression of timid

expectation that could not rise to the strength of hope —a sad look sometimes seen in old people, distressing even to the uninterested observer.

At the end of dinner, Fédor Mikhéitch was going to *celebrate* his generous entertainers and their honoured guest, but Radîloff looked at me, and begged him to be silent. The old man passed his hand over his greasy lips, winked, bowed, and resumed his seat—this time on a corner of his chair. After dinner, Radîloff and I retired to what was called his study.

In men who are mastered by one thought or one passion, a symptom may be remarked which is common to all—a certain identity of manners and deportment whatever difference may exist in their natural dispositions, their talents, their position in the world, or their education. The more I observed Radîloff, the more convinced I became that his whole soul gravitated about one fixed idea. It is true, he talked about political economy, the crops, about hay, the wars, provincial gossip, the next elections—and he talked about them naturally, and not without a certain degree of warmth; but suddenly he would heave a deep sigh, fall back in his chair like a man exhausted by some rude labour, and pass his hand several times over his face. His heart, which I cannot help believing was a good and warm heart, seemed to be thoroughly penetrated with one idea—one sentiment. This was a point that could not fail to strike me, in the studious scrutiny to which I subjected my neighbour. It was impossible to discover that he liked any of those things that seize the fancy of his fellow-men. I could not find out that he was fond of the pleasures of the table, or of wine, or of sporting; nor that he had a taste for Koursk nightingales, or for epileptic pigeons, or for Russian literature, or for Brandenbourg surtouts, or for cards or billiards, or for

evening parties, or for making tours through the country-towns, or for paper manufactories, or for beet-root sugar, or for staring gaudily painted pavilions in his parks or gardens, or for tea, or for building, or for hard drinking, or for the luxury of fat coachmen, with their waists up at their arm-pits—these magnificent and highly prized coachmen, whose eyes almost leap out of their heads at every movement of their necks.

"What sort of Russian country gentleman is this?" said I to myself. He did not seem, either, to be a sombre or sullen person, or discontented with his condition. On the contrary, there breathed around him an atmosphere of universal benevolence—a disposition, in some degree perhaps displeasing, to make an intimate of the first person he met. But, in reality, any one with a little penetration could perceive that he was quite incapable of true friendship with any one—not that he felt the need of social existence—far from it; but his whole soul seemed concentrated within itself. While thus analysing the character of M. Radiloff, I was not able to think of him as a man happy either in his present condition or in his prospects. He was not what one could call a handsome man; but in his expression, in his whole person, there was something very attractive. The moment you saw him, the desire would seize you to know him, and you would feel disposed to love him. It is true, after a longer acquaintance, something of the small country gentleman and the inhabitant of the steppes would begin to come out; it is impossible entirely to escape local influences; but he was an excellent gentleman, notwithstanding.

We had begun to talk about the lord-marshal of the district, that had just been elected by ballot, when we heard Olga, not far from the door, announcing to us that tea was ready, and we returned to the drawing-room.

Fédor Mikhéitch was seated, as usual, in a corner, between a door and the window, his legs modestly drawn under his chair. Radîloff's mother was knitting a stocking. Through the windows, which opened on the garden, came a fresh breeze, laden with the smell of apples. Olga presided at the tea-table with a grace that was not the result of mere habit. I observed her with greater attention than at dinner. She spoke very little, like all the young ladies in the country districts; but I did not remark that she, like them, seemed possessed with a desire to give utterance to some good thought, which was suppressed by the painful feeling of an inability to express it properly. I never saw her sighing under the weight of inexpressible sensations. She did not roll her eyes about, as such young ladies generally do. She never smiled vaguely, and with an air of reverie.

Her look was full of calmness and confidence, like that of a person who has just attained self-possession after some wonderful stroke of good fortune, or a terrible fright. Her gait, her movements, were free from the least trace of awkwardness, embarrassment, or constraint. She pleased me very much.

Radîloff and I pursued our conversation. I do not remember what led us to make the common and quite hackneyed remark, that sometimes the very least things produce a deeper impression upon us than things of the highest importance.

"Yes," said Radîloff, "I have experienced that myself. You know I was once married. I lived three years with my wife, and then she died in childbed. I sincerely believed that I could not survive her. I was sunk in deep sorrow—despairing, but I never wept. I wandered about like a ghost. They dressed her in her finest robes, as the custom is, and laid her on the table

—on this very table we are sitting at. The priest came; the sacristans entered. They chanted the ritual, they recited the prayers, they burned their incense. I crossed myself; bowed to the ground. . . I never shed a tear. My heart and head seemed to be petrified by the compressing weight of sorrow. In this way passed the first day. The night came. Will you believe me when I tell you that I slept? I slept!—Next morning I went to look at the body of my wife. It was the middle of summer; the sun shone full on the body, from head to foot, with great brilliance. All of a sudden I saw . . . (Radîloff shuddered) . . . what, do you think? Her eyes were half open; I saw a fly crawling in the narrow channel between the eyelids . . . . I fell to the ground like lead, and when I came to myself again, I wept—wept for hours without ceasing—without being able to contain myself . . . "

Radîloff stopped. I looked at him, and then at Olga. Though I should live for an age, I can never forget the expression of her face. The old lady laid her stocking in her lap, took out her pocket-handkerchief, and wiped away two large tears. Fédor Mikhéitch suddenly started up, ran to his violin, and began to shout in a disagreeable and savage voice some Russian song. Unfortunate! his intention was good; he wished to try, in his way, to divert us from these sad thoughts. We all shuddered at the first sound of his voice, and Radîloff gently begged him to desist.

"Well," continued he, "the past is past; he who died a minute ago is as much dead as he who died a thousand years ago, and perhaps at last . . . everything is, in fact, ordered . . . for the best in the best of worlds, as Voltaire says, I believe," added he quickly.

"Yes," said I carelessly, "no doubt. Besides, man can bear sorrow, and there is no situation, however miserable, that will not one day have an end."

"You think so?" said Radîloff; "perhaps you are right. I remember, in Turkey I was lying half-dead in the lazar-house; I had a putrid fever. We had no reason to congratulate ourselves on the conveniences of the place; one must take the chances of war. But the place was choke-full of patients, and yet they were still bringing in sick people . . . Where were they to be put? The doctor ran here and ran there, looking about through all parts of the hospital—no room anywhere. He comes up to my pallet, and says to his assistant, 'Is this one still living?' The attendant answered, 'he was living this morning, at any rate.' The doctor bent down, and found that I still breathed. He was annoyed, for I heard him saying, 'Stupid fellow! he will die; there is no chance for him! he will die, and yet he clings to life; it will be some time before he gives up the ghost, and in the meantime he is taking up room to the injury of the sick.' 'Ah!' thought I, 'it is well done of you, Mikhaïlo-Mikhaïlytch.' Well, I got better, and as you see, I am still alive; so that it seems you are perfectly right."

"O yes! especially in this case," I answered, "for "even death would have been an escape from your miserable situation."

"No doubt, no doubt," he resumed, striking significantly on the table; "it is only necessary to resolve, to come to a settled determination . . . An insupportable situation, continued, prolonged, would be the death of good sense . . . Why put off, and delay, and postpone . . .?

Olga rose quickly, and went into the garden.

"Come, Fédia, have you a mind to dance now?" cried Radîloff.

Fédia bounded from his seat, and danced round the chamber in that elegant and very peculiar step which we have seen the famous hare practising round

dancing bruin, singing, at the same time, with a modest air:

"When seated on the mail, I see. . . ."

We heard the noise of an equipage arriving at the porch, and in a few moments a stranger entered the room.

Next day I and Ermolaï* rose at daybreak, and went out to shoot. We spent the following day in the same way. A week after, I called at Radîloff's house when passing, but I found neither him nor Olga at home, and a few days afterwards, I heard that he had disappeared on the very night of my visit, deserted his mother, and run away with his sister-in-law. The report had spread over the whole province, while I, his nearest neighbour, was ignorant of the news till it had become quite stale. The moment I heard of this occurrence, I explained to myself the expression of Olga's face while Radîloff was telling us his experience at the sight of his dead wife. Her features, in fact, did not express merely sorrow and pity; they were also burning with jealousy.

Before leaving my estate, I thought it my duty to call upon Radîloff's mother. I found her in the saloon, she was playing at loo with Fédor Mikhéitch.

"Have you any news of your son, madame?" I said before leaving.

The old lady began to shed tears. I did not repeat my question.

*We may mention in passing, that in Russia it is usual to name one's-self first, whether we are talking of a prince or a peasant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ODNOVORETZ.*—GREAT AND PETTY NOBILITY AND BOURGEOISIE IN RUSSIA.

FIGURE to yourself a man of high stature, large, without being obese, of about seventy years of age, and with a face whose general contour recalled forcibly the well-known countenance of John Kryloff, with his clear, intelligent look, under the deep shadow of overhanging eyebrows; a man of grave air, of measured speech, of a slow and sedate walk—figure to yourself such a man, and you will have a notion of the external appearance of Ovcianikoff. He was generally dressed in an ample blue frock-coat with long sleeves, buttoned to the chin and adorned with round brass buttons, which were kept in a state of the highest polish. From the neck of this coat there just peeped out a silk puce-coloured necker-

* The word *Odnovoretz*, though signifying *freedman*, denotes the ambiguous class of small proprietors, who in Russia are neither serfs, nor freedmen, nor military nobles, nor lords of the soil, and who existed before the *bourgeoisie* were created, or elevation to the rank of noble became usual. They are a class very jealous of their rights; and from their secluded life far from towns, their contempt of luxury and mutual union, they have acquired the character of a sect more than of a class. They do not aspire to the rank of the *boïaria* or *voïevodia*. To these classes belong the genuine Russian grandee alone, whose peculiar title is *velmoj*. A type of the grandee has been already depicted in a preceding chapter.

chief. His general aspect was that of a rich merchant. He had very beautiful hands, white and well-preserved. He did not wish to hide them, it seemed to me; for he had a trick, when conversing, of carrying them to the buttons of his coat. Ovcianikoff, by his air of importance and his inactivity, by his sagacity and sloth, by his honesty and usefulness, forcibly recalled to me the old Muscovite Boyards of the era preceding Peter the Great. The *ferez** would have well become such a head as his; he was, in fact, a rare relic of bygone times. He was respected by all his neighbours, and it was considered a high honour to be acquainted with him. As to the Odnovortzi—his equals legally, they saluted him with a profound obeisance when they met him. They were excessively proud of him, and would have sworn by him.

In general, it is not easy, even at the present day, to distinguish an Odnovoretz from a peasant. His style of living is at times inferior to that of the moujik; his calves may not be fed on milk and bran, his horses may be broken-winded, and his harness made of well-ropes. Ovcianikoff was distinguished among the men of this class, although not considered to possess much wealth. He lived with his wife in a cottage, very well arranged and neatly kept; he had few servants, and never called them servants, but workpeople. They, in fact, were his field-labourers. He did not give himself out for a noble, or assume the petty lord; he never forgot himself, never sat down on a first invitation, and never failed to rise at the appearance of a visitor, however humble he might be; and he did all with so much dignity, with such a grand air of perfect breeding, that one felt an involuntary inclination to offer more politeness than he received. Ov-

* The furred cap of the ancient Boyards (nobles).

cianikoff held by ancient usages, not from any superstitious feeling, for he had an independent mind, but from custom. For instance, he did not like spring vehicles, because he thought it effeminate to indulge in their too gentle motion. He went about in a drochka or a little car lined with leather, and drove with his own hand his fine bay (he kept only bay horses). His coachman, a young fellow as ruddy as a peach, with hair cut short, a grey armiak, a little sheepskin cap, and a leathern girdle, sat respectfully by his side on the leathern cushion. Ovcianikoff invariably indulged in a siesta; took a bath on Saturdays; read nothing but religious books—his silver spectacles gravely resting on his nose; went to bed betimes, and rose early. He wore neither hair nor beard in the Russian fashion—neatness and cleanliness gained by it, and the dignity of his face lost nothing. He received his visitors cordially, but without officiousness, or making any attempt to overwhelm them with dried fruits and salt provisions.

"Wife," he would say in a low tone, turning a little aside from his company, "bring some refreshment."

He considered it a crime to sell his grain. In 1840, a year of great dearth and high prices, he distributed all his surplus produce among the proprietors round about, and among those peasants whose masters were absent, and whose overseers had exhausted their means of supplying them. In the following year, all those who had been benefited by his liberality paid their debt in kind with the liveliest gratitude.

Ovcianikoff's neighbours appealed to his arbitration in their differences, and though often very much excited, they were almost always calmed by his voice, and listened to his counsels; and although their hearts might occasionally rebel in secret, their minds were subdued, and always submitted to his decision.

Thanks to him, many a long and fierce feud about boundaries has been put an end to; but, after two or three assaults on the part of noble ladies, he proclaimed that once for all he refused ever again to act as mediator between persons of the fair sex. He could not endure hurry, impertinence, screams, exuberance of words, or excitement. One day his house took fire, one of his workmen rushed into his room like a maniac, shouting, "The house is on fire!"

"That is no sufficient cause for such an outcry; come, my good fellow, fetch me my hat and cane."

He was fond of exercising his horses. One day a young *biteouka*,* which he had taken a fancy for and bought, took him down the slope of a ravine at a quicker rate than he wished. "So, so! you little fool, you wish to kill yourself, do you?" muttered Ovcianikoff in a good-natured tone, and in a moment master and servant, drochka and foal, were hurled over a precipice. Fortunately at this spot, the bottom of the ravine was thickly laid with beds of the finest sand; the two men escaped with a few sprains and bruises, but the pony had its leg broken. "Ah! you see," resumed Ovcianikoff calmly, as he raised himself with difficulty, and brushed the dirt from his clothes, "I told you you would do it!"

Like husband, like wife. Tatiana Illînichna was a large woman, grave and silent, who, instead of a bonnet, wore in all seasons and at all hours a brown silk kerchief. Everything in her seemed stiff and chilling, and yet no one had ever had occasion to complain of her severity; on the contrary, the poor pretty generally called her mother and benefactress. Her regu-

* A breed of horses met with in the province of Voronèj on the Don, not far from the famous Khrenoff studs, formerly the property of Count Orloff.

lar features, her large brown eyes, her lips so fresh, and so finely cut, still showed traces of the no common beauty which she must have possessed at twenty. It was a pity that such a couple had no children.

I had made Ovcianikoff's acquaintance at M. Radiloff's. Two days after, I visited the old gentleman at his own house. He did not say a word about the Radiloff story. He was seated in a large morocco arm-chair reading the Lives of the Saints—a grey cat purred on his shoulder. He received me, according to his custom, with the most refined politeness, and we began to talk together. Among other things, I said to him:

"To speak seriously, Louka Petrovitch, in the earlier times you lived in, life must have been better than now; in your youth, for example, was it not so?"

"Yes, in some respects, we had more tranquillity, more contentment; but we old men must remember that we were young then, and consequently more capable of enjoyment, and that, in reality, things are better to-day than they were fifty years ago, and that it will be better still for your children or grandchildren."

"Ah! do you know, Louka Petrovitch, that I expected an unreserved laudation of olden times?"

"No! I have little reason to praise 'the good old time.' May I venture to narrate a little incident to you, which will make you understand what time deserves to be preferred by me: 'You are a lord of the soil, just the same as your grandfather, and yet you would not do what he did; you belong to an entirely new generation. There are, to be sure, still people who unjustly oppress us, but perhaps it could not be otherwise. We heap up the meal under the millstone to get all we can out of the grain, ... but no, God be praised, I shall never see again what I have seen in the days of my youth."

"How, my dear sir?"

"I referred to your grandfather. He was a rough neighbour—a little monarch in his way. You know, I suppose . . . . how should you not know your own property? You know the large slope of land which extends from the plain of Tchaplin to that of Malin? You have just taken in your oats from it. Well, it belongs to me; such as it is, it is mine. Your grandfather took it from us. He set out to ride round his property on this side, and rode beyond his proper boundary, and, stretching out his hand, said, 'This bit of land is mine,' and from that moment, without articles of agreement, without legal investiture, he kept possession of it. My late father, an upright man and honest, but spirited on occasions like this (no one would tamely consent to be eaten), unable to restrain his indignation, carried his complaint to a court of justice. He was not the only sufferer, but the others were too much afraid to say anything. Some one told your grandfather that Peter Ovcianikoff had protested before the magistrates against the spoliation. Your grandfather immediately despatched his huntsman Bauch with his gang to our house; they seized my father, and dragged him before the dread lord. I was then quite a little boy; I followed barefoot. My father was led in front of your windows, and there beaten with rods. Your grandfather was a spectator, leaning on the balustrade of the balcony, and your grandmother was at the open window. My father addressed the lady, 'Maria Vacilievna, intercede for me, I beseech you; you at least will have pity on me.' She made an undecided movement with her hand, and looked in another direction. They at last extorted from my father a promise that he would give up the land, and compelled him to thank the whole of them for being let off

with his life, though half-dead with blows. This is the only title you have to that land. Ask your old peasants what name they give to it, and they will reply, *The field of the bastinado*—a name borrowed from the price it cost. I tell you this merely to show you that young men have little reason to regret the past."

I was at a loss what to reply to Ovcianikoff. I had not courage even to look him in the face. He resumed:

"There was another neighbour who came about the same time to settle in these parts. He was called Stepan Komof—a hardened drunkard. He loved to drink largely; and when he had swallowed a bumper, and said in French, 'C'est bon,' there was nothing for it but to carry away the saints and veil the Virgin.* He used frequently to send round, inviting all the neighbours to a carousal; and if any one refused to come, he then went to them as fast as he could, with three horses; and there was a quarrel. He was a very singular man. Fasting, he never told a falsehood. But, when he had drunk well, and found himself in the vein, he was almost sure to begin to tell you how he had three houses on the Fontanka †—one red, and possessing only one chimney; the other, yellow, with two; and the third, blue, without any chimney at all; and how, moreover, he had three sons (you must remember that he was only a young man himself)—the one in the infantry, the other in the cavalry, and the third neither in the horse nor foot. He added that each of his sons inhabited one of these houses; that admirals were in the habit of visiting the eldest, generals the second, and that the third received none but English. Thereupon he would rise and say, 'Let us

* The images which adorn Russian houses.

† One of the canals of St. Petersburg.

drink to my eldest, he is the most respectable;' and he would then burst into tears. 'Unfortunate was the man who left his glass on the table undrained. 'You,' he would say, 'you wish to have a ball in your head, I suppose, and you will have it too at once; but if you think that you will be put in consecrated ground you are much mistaken.' He then would leap from his seat and exclaim—'People all! we must now dance, every one of us, for your pleasure as well as for mine. Come, up, up, all of you! You ugly bald-pate, up! And you, you old fool; and you there, you yellow-face —up, every one of you!' He used to tire his young female vassals to death. They were sometimes compelled to sing at the pitch of their voices all night long in chorus. She who attained by a violent effort the highest note, received a reward; and when at last, fatigue and exhaustion put an end to their caterwauling, the master would lean his cheek in his left hand, and begin dolorously to whine and howl—'Ah me! orphan, poor orphan that I am! My dove has left me all alone, abandoned to my sorrow.' The grooms, affected by the excessive grief which he displayed, immediately recommenced, and songs resounded through the house more loudly than ever. My father unfortunately had come under his notice, and he would certainly have been the death of an old man who had suffered so often and so cruelly; but Komof himself, having in a state of intoxication climbed to the top of a dove-cot, fell down and never rose again. That, sir, was one of our neighbours in the 'good old time.'"

"How different our age is from that!"

"Ah! yes," replied Ovcianikoff. "One must confess, however, that the nobility displayed far more splendour than now, even if we except the *Velmojes;* they are out of our sphere entirely, although I have

seen them, too, at Moscow. They say that they are all to be found there now."

"You have, then, been to Moscow?"

"Yes, a long time ago—a very long time ago. I am now seventy-two years old, and I was only sixteen when I visited Moscow."

Ovcianikoff sighed.

"What great people did you see there?"

"I saw a great many of the Velmojes, and everybody might have had the same opportunity. They kept open house summer and winter, and made an honourable use of their wealth. No one, however, went about the Count Alexis Grigoriêvitch Orloff Tchesménski. He had taken my uncle to be manager, and I had consequently many opportunities of seeing him. The Count lived in the Chabolovka (a part of Moscow), near the Kalouga gate. He was a genuine *Velmoj*. What a dignified mien and graceful air! It is impossible to imagine anything like him, and one is at a loss for words when speaking of him. That form! that strength! that look! A stranger would not have ventured to approach him; he would have been afraid and felt alarmed; but when he did come in contact with him, he was warmed and invigorated as by a beautiful sunrise. He was extremely accessible. He had a universal capacity. In races he rode himself, and contended with . . . it mattered not whom. He never outstripped his rival quickly; he never did anything unfair or tried to retard him; and took the decided lead only when approaching the goal. In his great good-nature he never failed to console the vanquished and to praise his horse. He kept ring-doves of the first quality, with white beaks, and he used often to come down into the large court, and, sitting in a chair, let all his doves fly round him, while his servants were planted on the roofs of the houses on every

side, armed with guns, to keep off birds of prey; at the Count's feet was placed a large silver basin filled with water, into which he looked to enjoy the reflection of the playful circlings of the pigeons. The infirm and poor used to come by hundreds to get food handed through the gratings of the back kitchen, and after they had been satisfied, he would distribute money among them. If any one vexed him, he made a noise like thunder; but there was no thunderbolt, only a passing cloud, and he was all smiles again. If he gave a festival, Moscow for that day was intoxicated. As a soldier, everybody knows how he beat the Turks at Tchesmè. He was fond of wrestling, and Samsons used to come and try their strength with him from Toula, Kharkhoff, and Tamboff. They were brought from all sides. Those who were vanquished were rewarded, and those who conquered him were embraced as though they had been brothers, and loaded with gifts. I had the good fortune to be in Moscow when he gave a race such as had never been seen in Russia before. He invited all the sportsmen of the empire to pay him a visit on a certain day and hour three months after, bringing their servants and dogs with them. They assembled; every sportsman with his attendants and dogs—a perfect army—and poured into the palace. There was a luncheon; you may imagine what it was. After drinking, the race began before an innumerable crowd of spectators, and what dog, think you, gained the advantage, and, distancing its competitors, gained all the honours of the day? It was one of your grandfather's, an Orel dog."

"Milovidka, perhaps."

"Milovidka, Milovidka. The Count, I remember, then said to your grandfather, 'Sell me that dog, I entreat you, and set your own price upon it.' 'No, Count, I am not a dog-dealer—I am no merchant,' was

the reply; 'on an occasion when honour and not money demanded it, I might give up my wife, but my dog Milovidka!—no; I would rather be detained as your prisoner.' Alexis Grigorièvitch praised him for this, and said, '*Leoubleou*,' (I love you). Your grandfather carried off the victor in his carriage; and when Milovidka died, he interred him to the sound of fine music, and the body was laid under a willow in the garden. Yes, he performed funeral obsequies in honour of a dog, all in due form, for it *was* a dog indeed, and over it he carved an inscription on a stone, which must still be in existence."

"It is evident from your account of Alexis Grigorièvitch, that he at least never did any injustice to anybody."

"Yes, there are always some like him; though there are some too who sail in the stream only to retard the boats of others."

"And what sort of a man was this Bauch whom you spoke of?" I asked, after one or two minutes' silence.

"You have heard of Milovidka and not of Bauch? That is strange. He was your grandfather's chief huntsman, and he loved him almost as much as he loved his dog. Bauch was a dreadful man, and whatever your father might have ordered him to do, had it been to run upon the point of a sword, he would have done it at once. Then how he bellowed out tally-ho; it was like a cry of the forest itself. He sat on horseback as erect as a stick; but if the whim took him, he would dismount and lie down on the ground—it mattered not where. The dogs missing the sound of his voice, would get into confusion, and, losing the scent, no power on earth could make them advance a step. Your grandfather, not a little amazed, as you may suppose, would swear, 'May I be blasted by lightning, if I do not make the good-for-nothing smart for this. I will give him a

sound drubbing, and pack him home like a simpleton. Ah! the villain—the cursed rascal!' He ended by sending to enquire what he was after, what he meant to do, and what explanation he could give of his conduct. On these occasions Bauch would demand an unlimited supply of spirits. They brought him all they had; he drank several good bumpers, remounted, and resumed the tally-ho in a masterly style."

"You are yourself a sportsman, Louka Petrovitch, I suppose," said I to Ovcianikoff.

"I had great delight in it in my youth; but as you must be aware, it is an amusement beset with difficulties for men of my rank. Good sense commands us to keep at a distance from the nobles. Let a man of our class (and certainly none but a drunkard or a good-for-nothing would do so) approach them, and what kind of reception does he meet with? He will be covered with shame. He will be compelled to mount a lame beast; his cap will be taken from him, and thrown among the reeds; his arms or legs will ever and anon be made to smart, as some facetious fellow feigns to whip his horse; and yet he must laugh, and make the others laugh too. . . . No, no; some may have another opinion; but I think that the more inconsiderable one is, he is all the more exposed to insult, and has good reason to regulate his conduct carefully.

"Yes," resumed Ovcianikoff after a short pause, "there have been effaced from the earth the very traces of men, dogs, wolves, and foxes, since I was born; other times are come. In the nobles, above all, I observe a striking change. The poor gentlemen of the country have all been in the Government service, or at least, they no longer stagnate on their lands, as they used to do; and as to the wealthy country gentlemen, it is impossible to recognise one of them again. I saw

a great number of them at the registration, and I assure you it filled my heart with joy only to look at them. They are not only accessible, but affable. . . . One thing only forcibly struck me as unfortunate. These nobles, who are acquainted with every branch of knowledge, and who speak with an eloquence that touches the soul, do not at bottom understand business, and have not the least notion of their own real interests. The serf whom they have selected as overseer makes them to do this or that, just as he pleases. You perhaps know Koroleff Alexander Vladimirovitch? He is the very pattern of a noble, has a fine person, wealthy, and of good education. He has studied at foreign universities, where one knows almost everything, I believe. Then he talks agreeably and modestly, and shakes the hand of an inferior warmly. You know him? Well, listen.

"Three weeks ago we all presented ourselves at Bérézovka, at an assembly convoked by Nicéphor Illitch, the arbiter. The arbiter addressed us in the following words:—'Gentlemen, we must proceed to the measurement of lands, to the settling of boundary lines, and to the registration of our district. It is shameful to be so far behind others in doing this. Let us set to work, then, without more delay.' They began, and in quarter of an hour statements were made on all sides, and altercations commenced. It was necessary to wait patiently. Disputes grew warm, and violent expressions were made use of by many. Alexander Vladimir Koroleff sat in a corner, biting the head of his cane, and shaking his head from time to time. I felt ashamed both for myself and for the others, and feeling that I could not stand it much longer, I was about to make my escape, when all at once Alexander Vladimirovitch rose, and signified a wish to be heard. The arbiter immediately made every exertion, and going from

group to group, he said, 'Gentlemen, gentlemen, silence, if you please; Alexander Vladimirovitch wishes to address the assembly.' To give the gentlemen their due, they were silent. I can give you only the sum of what he said; but that will be sufficient to give you some idea of his speech: 'Pardon me, gentlemen,' he said, 'but it seems to me that we have almost lost sight of the object of our assembling here. The business in hand is an exact division of our lands, and the fixing of an accurate boundary-line. Such an arrangement is indisputably of great importance to proprietors; but, to speak more generally, what is the real object of this? It is the amelioration of the condition of the peasant, the lightening of his labour, and the more equitable arrangement of his burdens. We all know well that it is a great evil in our day, that the cultivator of the soil does not himself know what field he is to cultivate, and that very frequently he has to walk to his work a distance of five versts from his home. . . . How can we expect this of him? It is a sacred duty, and one too long neglected, that of relieving the peasant, of making his well-being sure, and we should labour to accomplish this with courage and perseverance; for, indeed, if we look at the matter closely, their interests and ours are one—what is good for them is good for us; what injures agriculture necessarily injures us. It would be then irrational, and even culpable in us to dispute about trifles.' And so he went on . . . . ah! how finely he spoke. I assure you that it penetrated right to the heart of every man present. The nobles were all convinced and sorry. I, for my part, could not restrain my tears. Believe me, you will seek vainly in old books for a speech of such force as he delivered then; none exists, or ever did.

"Now, how did it all end? He himself refused to allow four acres of marsh-land to be divided, and was

as unwilling to sell them. He said, 'I will employ my people to drain them, and I will establish a great cloth manufactory there, on a new system. It is a bit of ground for which I have an affection, and I have my own projects with regard to it.' It would not have been so bad either, if this project had had any foundation. The truth is, that Koroleff's overseer had a project, and that was to sell the marsh, and he wished to feel the market beforehand. We separated, with everything just as it was when we began. Alexander Vladimirovitch is always highly delighted with the momentary effect of his speech, and in theory indeed it was full of wisdom. He speaks more than ever of his cloth manufactory, but not a foot of ground is drained yet."

"And how does he manage on his own property?"

"He is introducing innovations every month. The peasants find fault, but why should he heed their remarks? Koroleff knows what he is about; he goes on, and listens to nobody. I think he is quite right."

"Ah, Louka Petrovitch, I had expected to find you faithful in deed and word to everything that is old, and in some sort consecrated by use."

"Ah! as to myself, that is quite another affair. I am neither gentleman nor lord. Of what importance is my trifling farm economy? and my knowledge extends no further. I endeavour to act as is just and equitable, and thank God for the help he gives me." The young gentlemen of the present day do not like the customs they find established among us old country-people. They treat the peasant very much as they treated their toys fifteen years ago; they turn them round and round, break them, and throw them away. The overseer, himself a serf, and the German steward, do what they please with the peasants. And even if some young lord were to give an example, and prove by success how things

should be managed, what would he gain by doing so? I, for myself, must in the meantime come to some resolution or other. I see well that I shall die without seeing the new order of things brought about, and everywhere in operation. We live in a strange epoch; what was is no more, and what will be is not yet."

I reflected on all he said, but had no reply to make.

"Well, enough about the nobles," I said. "Now, my dear Louka Petrovitch, what have you to say about the Odnovortzi?"

"Nothing; pray do not ask me to speak of them," replied the Odnovoretz. "True . . I might tell you . . but, bah! let us rather take our tea in peace. Peasants after all, are only peasants; and in truth if we were anything but simple peasants in reality, what should we be? What could be made of us?"

He said no more; and tea was brought in. Tatiana Illînichna rose and took her place beside us. In the course of the evening she frequently left the room and returned again noiselessly, and as if she would have escaped observation; while Ovcianikoff slowly sipped one cup of tea after the other.

"Mitia (Demetrius) has come to see us," said Tatiana at last in a low tone.

"What does he want?" asked Ovcianikoff, frowning.

"He has come to ask pardon."

"Bah! . . . " said he, shaking his head, and then added, turning to me, "What is to be done with relations who annoy you? for in the end one cannot renounce them entirely. God has afflicted me with a nephew, a young fellow with some brains; he has studied too, but one can expect no good to come of it. He was in the service of the crown, but threw up his place because he had no promotion to hope for. He is not noble; but even if he were, he

could not be a general all at once. He lives an idle life now, and this is only half the evil; for he has become a kind of man of business and player of pranks; he draws up petitions for the peasants, writes reports, and cuts out productive work for surveyors. He runs about all the taverns, and makes acquaintances among the citizens in the towns. With such a life, he is sure to break his neck some day, and the police have given him more than one warning. But he is a very merry and witty fellow, and that saves him; he makes everybody laugh. Come, wife, confess, is he not in your room there? I know you; you are far too kind-hearted, and you always protect him!"

Tatiana Illînichna hung her head, smiled, and blushed.

"I see I have guessed rightly. Well, tell him to come in. Yes, yes; our guest will be good enough to excuse us, and I will be forgiving in honour of him. Call him."

Mitia was a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, tall, well-formed, and his hair all in curls. As he entered the room, he caught sight of me, and paused on the threshold. He was dressed like a European artisan after work-hours, but the bad shape of the folds of his coat about the shoulder showed that his dress was made by a Russian, and a bungling Russian too.

"Come forward, come forward," said the old man. "So you can feel shame, can you? Thank your aunt, you are forgiven. Allow me, sir, to recommend this good-for-nothing to your notice; it is my nephew, but that does not mean that I am about to launch out into his praises—ah, we are excessively polite, very!"

(The young man and I exchanged salutations.)

"Come, explain; what blunder is this you have been making now? What is the complaint against you? Speak."

Mitia was evidently desirous to avoid explaining, and justifying himself in my presence.

"Immediately, uncle," he muttered.

"No, not immediately, but at once. I know very well that you will have something like a conscience in the gentleman's presence, and that is precisely what you need. Speak! it is your penance. We wait to hear what you have got to say."

"I have no occasion to blush," said the young man with vivacity, drawing himself up at the same time. "The Odnovortzi of Rechetiloff come to me, and entreat me to intercede for them. I ask what is the matter. They answer: The grain depôts are with us faultless and well kept; one could not desire better. An officer has come, appointed by the government to examine them. After being admitted, he looked about him and said, 'Your depôts are in disorder; there is great remissness here, I see; my duty is to report it.' 'What disorder?' we asked. 'Ah! I know what I know,' he replied. We then assembled together, and it was proposed to send an *acknowledgment* to the inspector for his kind visit. But old Prokorytch said, 'By doing that you will only bring down upon you one fly after another; we are right or we are not.' The old man's advice was taken, the inspector made an outcry, complained, and sent off a bad report. Now an inquiry has been set on foot. I asked them if in reality their depôts were all as they ought to be. 'God is our witness,' they said, 'that everything is kept in the best order, and that the quantity of grain ordered by law is there.' 'Well,' I said, 'you have nothing to fear,' and I wrote out a paper for them, which they produced at the inquiry. It is impossible to say yet which side will be pronounced wrong. It is easy to explain why they came to you to complain of me;

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everybody knows that after the skin the shirt lies nearest the body, and I am your nephew; and so they wished to get at me through you."

"Good, I understand. And the other affair with the peasants of Choutolomovski?"

"How do you know about that?"

"You see that I know a little about it."

"There, again, I have done nothing wrong; there again I take you for judge. The peasants of this village have a certain neighbour of the name of Bezpandin who has brought under cultivation four acres which belong to them. He declares that this field is his, and the peasants of Choutolomovski unanimously maintain the contrary; but their lord is unfortunately abroad; who then is to defend their rights? The land has, without question, been regarded as theirs for more than a century, as the public records show. They came to beg me to write a petition for them. Why should I have refused this little service? Bezpandin got word of it, and hence his complaints and threats. 'I will tear the hands from his body,' he said, 'if I do not first tear off his head.' I have still both hands and head, however, at your service, my dear uncle."

"There, there now; be humble. Do not boast of anything. No good is likely to come to your head. You are three parts in four a fool, I can assure you of that."

"Well, uncle, have you not yourself often condescended to . . "

"I know, I know what you are going to sing about. Well, yes; no doubt men ought to live in accordance with the precepts of right and justice, and a man ought to go to the assistance of his neighbour in difficulty. There are cases when it is necessary even to expose one's-self without balancing advantages. But do

you always act honourably? Are you not in the habit of frequenting taverns, eh? Do you not spend your time carousing? Speak. Do you not let these poor people who need your help slip a tselkov or a blue note into your hand? Is that true—come, is that true?"

"Pardon me—there I have done wrong; forgive me. But I never take anything from the poor; no, from the poor, never; not a penny, nor anything of any kind whatever."

"Hitherto I daresay not; but it will come to that. And moreover, do not come and tell me that your clients are always little saints. But, leaving that—what have you been about for some time back, Mitia?"

"I was in town."

"Yes. You play billiards, drink tea six times a day, are always thrumming on guitars, breathe the air of the registries, compose petitions in back-rooms, and strut about with merchants' sons. Is it not so?"

"Yes, uncle," replied Mitia, smiling, "that is somewhere about the mark. I met Fedocia Mikhaîlovna."

"What Fedocia do you mean?"

"M. Garpéntchénko's Fedocia—the proprietor who purchased her at an auction. Fedocia belongs to Mikoulino. She lived in Moscow by her needle, and bravely paid an annual tribute of one hundred and eighty-two roubles, fifteen kopecks. She is clever at her work; she had a great deal to do, and was very happy at Moscow. M. Garpéntchénko made her come to the village, and keeps her there without giving her any employment. She wishes to redeem herself, and has spoken to her master about it; but he will not give her an answer. You know M. Garpéntchénko, uncle; could you not speak a word for Fedocia? She would pay a good price."

"Drawn from your pocket, I suppose, eh? Good. I will speak to him; only you had better take care of yourself; I forgive the past—but the future. . . . Heaven is my witness that I forewarn you that you will break your neck yet, at least that you will never be wiser. Well, there is nothing more to be said; you may go."

Mitia went out, and Tatiana Illinichna prepared to follow.

"Yes, go as quickly as you can, my too indulgent wife, and regale this rascal with the best tea in the house. The fellow" (he added, turning to me) "is not a fool, you see, sir; and he has an excellent heart. I am just a little afraid of him. . . . But pardon—a hundred times pardon—for occupying your time with such trifles."

The door of the ante-room opened, then that of the room in which we sat, and there entered a little grey-headed man, in a black velvet frock-coat.

"Ah, Frantz Ivanovitch!" cried Ovcianikoff; "good morning. How goes it with you?"

Frantz Ivanovitch Lejeune, my country neighbour, lord of the soil, was a Frenchman. He had attained the rank of gentleman and Russian lord in a way which is not quite the grand highway by which men ascend to such positions. He was born at Orleans of a French father and mother, and came along with Napoleon the Great to conquer Russia in his capacity of drummer. At first, so long as the barometer stood at "Fair," everything went smoothly, and our Frenchman marched into Moscow with head erect, and manfully beating his drum. But when the barometer fell to rain, and snow storms, and they were all in full retreat, poor M. Lejeune, benumbed with cold, and having no longer any drum to beat, fell into the hands of the Smolensk peasantry. They shut him up for the night in an

old fulling-mill, and came in the morning to take him to an open space where there was a river embankment. Near this embankment they stopped, and requested the brave drummer to take leave of them cleverly by making a profound obeisance—that is to say, by plunging just a little under the ice which then covered the river. M. Lejeune seemed really unable to accept this invitation, and began to represent to the moujiks of Smolensk that they would do an excellent deed by permitting him to betake himself as quickly as he could to Orleans.

"Gentlemen," he said, in the very fine language of his country, freed from all the roughness and military slang which usually characterise the conversation of our friends the drummers—"Gentlemen, reflect that I have a tender and affectionate mother." But the moujiks, who probably were ignorant of the precise geographical position of Aurelian's town, persisted in urging upon him the closed waters of the Gniloterka as a means of conveyance, and had even commenced to play with their hands on the nape of his neck and his back; when suddenly, to the great joy of M. Lejeune, a tinkling of bells was heard, and on the embankment appeared an immense sledge, covered with a grey speckled carpet, and drawn by three little round Viatka ponies of the same colour. In this sledge was seated a large red-faced gentleman, wrapt in a wolfskin.

"What are you about there, boys?" he asked the peasants.

"We are drowning a Frenchman, my lord."

"Ah!" said the gentleman, with the greatest *sang-froid*, and turned aside to proceed.

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur!" cried the poor devil, as loud as he could bawl.

"Stay," said the wolf-pelisse in a tone of annoyance. "This fellow here has come into Russia by government order, along with ever so many heathen nations. He has set fire to Moscow, the madman; he has torn the cross from the cupola of Ivan the Great . . . and now . . . it is *mossié mossié*. Ah! ah! we have our ears and hair hanging low enough now; death and torture to the brigands! Drive on, Filka, drive on! (The horses moved on). One moment, Filka. Hallo, you, sir, do you know music?" he shouted in Russian.

"Save me, oh! save me, my good sir!" repeated Lejeune, who had not a single idea in his head, and no time to spare.

"Oh, heavens! what a wretched race of people these are! They have entered Russia, I suppose to the number of a million, and yet to think that not one of them can speak a word of Russian." And making a great effort to speak French, he said to Lejeune, "*meousique, meousique, savé meousique, vous? savé? Eh, bienn, reponndonn; comprénné? savé meousique vous, Francé, savé? sur forté-piano joué . . . joué savé?*"

Lejeune, to whom these words, whatever others may think of them, were a whole world, saw at this moment immense fields of hope open before him. He understood the good gentleman; he hit his meaning more quickly than if one of his ancient comrades had addressed him in the slang of the camp and canteen.

"Yes, sir, yes, yes; I am a musician. I play upon all possible instruments, you will find. Yes, sir; save me, sir. I will give you as much music as you please."

"Come, then; your good angel will rejoice," replied the lord. "Boys, let him free. Stay, here are twenty kopecks to drink."

"Thanks, my lord, thanks. Well, so be it; take him."

Lejeune was then put in the sledge. He was quite wild with joy, wept, clasped the gentleman's knees like a suppliant, made profound reverences, and thanked at once the master, the driver, and even the moujiks, who, a moment before, were about to throw him into the river. He had nothing on his body but a kind of green blouse, tied with red cords, and the cold was intense. The lord saw his blue-cold limbs, and threw a fold of his pelisse round him, and in a short time set him down at his house, leaving orders to attend to him. His people ran forward, and taking the *Frantsouzz*, did all they could to warm him, and gave him food and clothes. He was then presented by the proprietor to his daughters.

"Here, my children, is a teacher, whom I have found for you. You have always plagued me to find some one who could teach you music and the French *dialect*. . . *Cà, vous, monsié,*" he continued in French, while pointing out to Lejeune a wretched little piano, purchased in 1807 from a Jew who hawked laces, paintings by the great masters, and *eau de Cologne*. "*Allonn, allonn, fésé vous à nous voir votre talent; joué, joué; soyé pas hontée.*"

Lejeune, half dead with alarm, sat down before the instrument. He had never in his whole life before put his fingers on a piano.

"*Joué, joué,*" repeated the master of the house, obstinately.

The unfortunate man in despair threw his fingers on the notes at hazard, only taking care to adapt his time to the airs of the fifer of his regiment, while he sang boldly, moving his head now to the right, and now to the left. Long after this, he himself used to recount, in pretty good Russian, and with great vivacity, all these incidents. "I believed," he would say, "that

my preserver would order a couple of lackeys to seize me, and pitch me out into the court. Accordingly, while making this caterwauling, I kept a vigilant eye upon his movements. But to my great surprise, after two minutes of fearful uncertainty, my lord came up to me, and patting me familiarly on the shoulder, said, "*Tré bienn, tré bienn, jé vois que vous savé; vous allé dormé, dormé, dormé.*"

At the end of a fortnight, Lejeune was kindly handed over by his patron to a wealthy and well-educated gentleman; and his amiable and jovial character gave such pleasure to his new master, that he married him to a young person whom he had brought up. Lejeune having rapidly learned to read, write, and speak Russian pretty well, entered the government service, and did his duties so ably, that he earned personal nobility, and after that hereditary nobility—patronage helping him a little. And as he was now father of a daughter, he became in the course of time father-in-law to Lobysanieff, a gentleman of Orel, ex-dragoon, and a great writer of verses. Lejeune ended by coming to live in our part of the country, at the solicitation of his brother-in-law.

Such was this Lejeune, or, as he is now universally named, Frantz Ivanovitch, who now entered the house of his intimate friend Ovcianikoff.

But in all probability my reader is weary of my long visit to Odnovoretz Ovcianikoff; and accordingly I hasten, though perhaps a little too late, to bring it to an end.—And it is done.

CHAPTER VII.

LGOFF.—MOVABLE CONDITION OF THE SERFS.

"Pray, sir, let us go and shoot at Lgoff," said Ermolaï to me; "there we shall shoot ducks by hundreds and thousands."

The wild duck has, as everybody knows, very slight attraction for a genuine sportsman; but, for want of other game (we were in the first week of September; it was not yet time for the thrush and woodcock, and I had had quite enough of following partridges), I consented, and we took our way to Lgoff.

Lgoff is a large village, situated far from any communication with other towns, and possesses a very ancient stone church, with a single dome, and also two mills on the banks of the oozy Rossota. The Rossota about five versts above Lgoff forms a large pond, whose surface, in the middle, as well as along the sides, is one mass of green reeds. In the bays and creeks among these reeds, there are whole colonies of ducks of every kind—domestic ducks with long tails, wild ducks, teal, and many others. Here and there they may be occasionally seen fluttering a few feet above the surface of the pond; and if a shot is fired, there mount into the air such clouds of them, that the sportsman involuntarily puts his right hand to his mouth and shouts a prolonged *tbrrrrou!* Ermolaï and myself began to coast along the pond. We knew very well that the duck is a bird which along the bank is always on its guard, and never

lies close, and that if any imprudent teal should expose itself to our fire, it would be quite impossible for our dogs to fetch it out from among the intricate mass of reeds. Spite of their noble devotedness, they could neither swim nor walk on a mud bottom, and would only cut their mouths on the sharp points of the reeds.

"Come," said Ermolaï, "it is quite clear that we must get a boat. Let us go back to Lgoff, for there are none to be had hereabouts."

"Let us go to Lgoff then, and get one."

We had scarcely taken twenty paces on our way back, when we saw a dog of wretched appearance, lying behind a tufted willow bush, and immediately after, caught sight of a man of middle height, dressed in a very thread-bare blue frock-coat, a yellow waistcoat, grey linen pantaloons carelessly pushed into holed boots, and a scarlet neckerchief. He carried a gun on his shoulder on cock. Our dogs, lovers as they all are of the Chinese ceremonial, put nose to nose with the new comer, and by the smell at once gained an idea of his personality, while the stranger quadruped, with very bad taste, terrified by their salutations, instead of responding prettily, put his tail between his legs, hung his ears, and wheeled round all in a piece, without bending a joint, snarling and snapping at his new friends. While this was going on, the man, with better manners than his dog, had approached, and saluted us in a very fine style. From his appearance, he must have been about twenty-five. His long fair hair, strongly impregnated with kvass, was twisted into stiff curls; his little grey eyes sparkled with the desire of pleasing; and his face, enveloped in a broad black ribbon, as if he suffered from toothache, smiled ineffably.

"Permit me to introduce myself," he said to me in a soft and insinuating tone: "I am Vladimir, resident

sportsman in the village, and hearing of the arrival of two sportsmen, who had taken the way to our pond, I resolved to come and offer you my services, if not disagreeable to you."

Vladimir, in his way of uttering his polite address, spoke exactly as young provincial actors do when they have to make their début in their first love-scene. I accepted his offer, and knew his history before we had reached Lgoff. He was a freedman. In his childhood he had learned music; in his youth he had been employed in his master's house as *valet de chambre;* he could read; he had read, I could see, several of those little books which penetrate everywhere from the great fairs; and now he lived, as so many live in Russia, without being worth a penny, without a profession or trade, and seemed to rely for his support on heavenly manna. He expressed himself in very select terms, spoke in a neat, precise way, and in general, arranged his attitudes and manner with great care. He must certainly have been a great *roué*, a redoubtable gallant, and very probably a successful one, too. The Russian girls are quite mad about eloquence. He led me to understand, among other things, that he was in the habit of hanging about the neighbouring gentry; that he had many good acquaintances in the town, could play at preference, and had some knowledge of the inhabitants of our capitals. He smiled much, and had an infinite variety of smiles. That which became him most, however, was a modest, reserved smile—a smile, I might say, of sympathetic attention, which hovered round his lips when listening to another's remarks. He was a good listener. He had an agreeable way of always giving his approbation; but he shewed that he did not lose sight of his own worth, for all that, by an expression of countenance which indicated that, if the occasion arose,

he also could form an opinion. Ermolaï, a man of no education, and quite destitute of anything like refined perception, would fain have *thoued* him very familiarly, and it was beautiful to see with what fine irony Vladimir let drop the most gracious *yous*.

"Why do you wear that ribbon?" I asked; "have you toothache?"

"No," he replied; "it is a deplorable consequence of my own imprudence. I had a friend, an excellent man in his way, but an entire stranger to every kind of sport. One finds such men, even in the country. One evening he took it into his head to say to me—'My dear friend, take me with you when you go to shoot to-morrow morning; I wish to learn for myself in what the pleasure consists.' I did not wish to disappoint my friend, and accordingly, procuring a gun, both of us set out into the fields at dawn. I knocked down several brace, and he frightened some sparrows; at last we thought of taking a little repose. I sat down under a tree; he, instead of doing that, began to go through soldiers' exercises with his gun, and pointed it at my cheek. I begged him to put an end to this sort of play; but as he had his finger on the trigger, off it went to his great astonishment, and carried away one fourth of my chin, along with the forefinger of my right hand."

We now reached Lgoff in quest of a boat or raft.

"Soutchok has a raft shaped like a flat boat," said Vladimir, "only I cannot tell whereabouts it lies. We must go and find him."

"Who is he?"

"A man of the village who has been nicknamed Soutchok (faggots)."

Ermolaï wished to accompany Vladimir to Soutchok's, and accordingly, telling them that they would find me at the church, I went to walk round it. While looking

at the tombs in the cemetery, I was attracted by a four-cornered urn, embrowned by time. On one side of it I read the following inscription in French :—"*Ci-gît Théophile Henri, Vicomte de Blangy*," and on the opposite side, in Russian, "Under this stone lie the remains of Count de Blangy, a French subject, who was born in 1737, and died in 1799, aged 62." "Peace to his ashes," was inscribed on the third side ; and the fourth bore a Russian stanza in praise of the poor emigrant, who, like so many others, had been a teacher, and to all appearance had gained the esteem and gratitude of people, to whom his memory and the family of the Blangys owe this monument, which will probably continue to exist for a long period.

The arrival of Ermolaï, Vladimir, and Faggots, interrupted my meditations.

Soutchok, lame, all in tatters, with beard and hair shaggy and dirty, had the appearance of a man of sixty, in the condition of servant in the family of a master not difficult to please in point of beauty of face.

"You have a boat?" I said to him.

"Yes," he replied with a hoarse voice, broken by hiccoughs, "but it is a bad one."

"What is wrong with it?"

"The beams have separated, and the heads of the clamping nails started."

"It does not matter much," said Ermolaï, "with greased hemp one can patch it up."

"Ah! to be sure ; get the hemp and grease, and that will be easily managed."

"Who are you? What is your trade?"

"I am our ladyship's fisher."

"A fine fisher without a boat!"

"What is the use, if there are no fish in the river?"

"The fish do not like the taste of the muddy marsh-water," said my huntsman in a dignified way.

"Well," I said to Ermolaï, "go and purchase the hemp, and refit the boat quickly."

Ermolaï went. I added, "After that we shall set out, and go all together."

"Heaven protect us," said Vladimir, whose courage I suspected; "at all events, it is probable that the pond is not very deep."

"No, not deep, no," said Soutchok, who habitually spoke like a heavy clown who could not make up his mind to rouse himself; "but there is a fearful mass of mud under the long strong reeds . . . and then there are holes in the boat besides."

"Ah! then, if the reeds are so strong, it will be impossible to row."

"Who rows upon rafts? we push along with a pole. I shall go with you, I have a good pole down there."

I lay down on the tomb of the noble emigrant while waiting for Ermolaï's return. Vladimir politely kept at a little distance, sitting down twenty paces behind me. Soutchok remained standing, his head hanging forwards, and his hands crossed behind him. This seemed to be his usual attitude. I addressed him:

"Tell me, pray, have you been a fisher long?"

"Seven years, my lord."

"Only! and before that what did you do?"

"I was a coachman."

"Why did you not remain in your former occupation, then?"

"The new lady dismissed me from the stables."

"What lady?"

"The lady who bought us, Aleona Timofeevna, a large, large woman—she's not young now. You know her, don't you?"

"No. What induced her to make you her fisher?"

"Heaven knows. She came from her property of Tamboff, assembled all her people, and presented herself among them; we all rushed forward and kissed her hand; she did not seem in the least put about. When that was at an end, she began to ask each successively what his occupation was. When my turn came, and she had learned that I was coachman, she said—'Coachman! coachman! you! what kind of coachman can you be with such a figure as that? A fine coachman forsooth! you belong to the stables no longer. Go, shave your beard, cut your hair; you are henceforth the fisherman of my household. When I am here you will furnish my table with fish, you understand me; and if my pond is not kept in good order you will be responsible.' 'Pray listen,' I replied; 'fish! my lady, I can't make them, and I beseech you to tell me how one can keep a pond like ours in order?'"

"To whom did you belong before entering her service?"

"To Serg Serghéitch Pehtireff, who inherited us. We had him for our master for six years. It was I who drove him about when he was here; in town he had another coachman."

"Had you been coachman from your youth?"

"No, no; I was made coachman by Serg Serghéitch; before that I was cook, only not for the town, but for the country."

"Cook! indeed, cook to whom?"

"To my old master, Athanas Nefedytch, Serg Serghéitch's uncle. The old gentleman had purchased Lgoff, and that is how it came into Serg Serghéitch's hands; he inherited it."

"From whom did old Athanas purchase it?"

"Eh? from Tatiana Vacilievna."

"Who is Tatiana Vacilievna?"

"Oh, she who died a maid at Bolkhoff, near Ravatchoff; a maid, look you—she was never married. Did you not know her? She held us from her father Vacili Semenitch, and was our mistress for a long time—for twenty years at least."

"Were you not her cook?"

"Yes, at first; but she was not long of making me her *kofichenok*."

"Her what?"

"Her ko-fi-che-nok."

"What office is that?"

"Well, I cannot say, my lord; only I was attached to the pantry, and received the name of Anntonn, and was Kouzma no longer. Madame had so ordered it."

"Your true name was Kouzma."

"Yes, Kouzma."

"And were you seventeen or eighteen years kofichenok?"

"Oh, no. I was an *ahkter* (actor)."

"What do you say? An ahkter?"

"I played at the *keatre* (theatre). Our ladyship had got up a keatre in a large room."

"What was your office?"

"I beg your pardon."

"What did you do in the theatre?"

"Ah! you do not know, then! Why, they took me and dressed me; I walked about just as I do with these clothes, stood still, sat down. They said to me, 'Speak, say this, and say that.' As to me, what did I care for that? I spoke just right on. Once I represented a blind man—eh! what? yes, sir, a blind man."

"After that, what were you?"

"After that? Oh, after that I was cook again."

"Why did you become a cook again?"

"Oh, my fellow-servant ran away."

"So. And what were you under the father of your first mistress?"

"With the father? With the father I was, you see, all sorts of things. At first, I was a little porter, and stood upright against a door; then postilion—we drove only four horses, and I was placed on a high saddle on the left leader; but they made me huntsman."

"Huntsman? On horseback? With dogs?"

"Yes, on horseback too, and with dogs; but I fell from my horse and was lamed, and the beast was lamed too. The old master was very severe; he had me beaten, and then I was sent to Moscow to be apprenticed to a shoemaker."

"Apprenticed! What do you say? You could not be a boy when you were made huntsman or whipper-in?"

"Oh, I must have been twenty."

"Apprenticed at twenty?"

"Oh, that did not much matter; there was nothing impossible in that, since our master ordered it. But as he died soon after, I was brought back to the village."

"And when was it, then, that you passed through your apprenticeship to the cooking?"

"O! It is not necessary, surely, to *learn* cooking? Why, we make the women cook, and then we taste—that is all," said Soutchok, raising his thin yellow face, in which a smile seemed to be vainly struggling into light.

"Come, come," I replied, "you have indeed played many parts in your life; but now that you are a fisher, what do you do since there are no fish?"

"Oh, I don't complain. I thank God that they have made me a fisher, as they say; but there is another old man, Andrew Poutyr, whom the lady attached to

the paper factory, although there was no factory. Poutyr said himself that it was a sin to eat bread which we did not earn, and at the same time he dreamt of some promotion; that was because he had a nephew who was clerk in my lady's counting-house, and he had promised to speak to the mistress for him, to get I cannot tell what. He fulfilled his promise, spoke, and the uncle Poutyr fell at the nephew's feet . . . I was present at the time . . ."

"Well, let us pass from that. Have you a family? Are you married?"

"No, sir; impossible. Tatiana Vacilievna—may the Lord open the gates of heaven to her!—our late mistress, did not permit any one here to marry. She once said in the presence of the priest, 'God keep me from allowing that. I am a maid, and yet I live; I shall remain a maid . . . What then? My people are well taken care of, what on earth do they wish?'"

"How do you live? do you receive wages or fixed salary?"

"A salary! my lady gives us provisions, and that is all we need, thank heaven! and may the Lord grant long days to our mistress!"

Ermolaï re-appeared, informed me in rather a cross tone that the raft was caulked and repaired, and sent Soutchok to fetch his pole.

During the whole conversation I had had with Soutchok, Vladimir had looked at this fine fellow with a most disdainful smile.

"What an idiot!" he remarked, as he saw him move away, "a genuine brute, a gross moujik, and nothing more. One cannot call such a creature as that a house-servant—and yet he boasts. How must he have played comedy? eh, sir? You have done him too much honour in talking so long with him."

At the end of quarter of an hour we were seated all four on the edges of the flat boat—having left our dogs under the care of my coachman Jerondill. We were not very much at our ease on the raft; but sportsmen are an accommodating race of men. Soutchok manœuvred behind; Ermolaï kept a look out a-head; Vladimir and I looked at our feet, which the water was not long in soaking, spite of the caulking. Fortunately the day was calm and the water of the pond unruffled.

We advanced slowly. The old man had considerable difficulty in drawing out his pole from several feet of mud and ridding it of the long herbs which were twisted intricately round it; the long leaves and flexible stalks of the water-lily, too, resisted the passage of our boat. At last, however, we gained the scene of action and the sport commenced. The ducks rose in a perfect cloud and with a fearful noise, alarmed by our unexpected intrusion into their domains. Our firing was pretty well kept up, and it was amusing to see these short birds, heavy and dumpy, turning round and round as they descended through the air, and striking the water with a noise like a washerwoman's beetle. It is unnecessary to say that we did not get all that were hit; those who had received only a few drops had presence of mind enough to dive at once, others, which were quite killed, fell among the thick reeds, where it was impossible for even the large eyes of Ermolaï to discover them. However, by mid-day our boat was loaded with victims piled in pyramids.

Vladimir, to the great delight of Ermolaï, shot very badly and always when he missed assumed great astonishment, examined his barrel, blew into it, and ended by endeavouring to explain to us the cause of his want of success. Ermolaï shot very successfully as usual; I, so so. Soutchok eyed us all the time with

the face of a man who from childhood had been brought up in the condition of a house-servant, crying out from time to time—"See, see, another duck!" Then, ashamed of having said anything, he rubbed his back, not with his hands, but with a peculiar movement of his two shoulders. The weather continued very fine; small, white, rounded clouds wandered in the air majestically, admiring themselves in the reflection of the water; the reeds moved and murmured slightly, though stirred by no breeze; the pond was in certain parts like a polished mirror, bathed in sunlight. Already we began to make preparations for returning to the village, when all of a sudden a troublesome incident occurred.

We had early observed that the water entered our boat, and Vladimir had been charged with the duty of baling it out with a basin which my provident Ermolaï had taken from a woman who stood gaping idly at us. All went well while Vladimir was zealous in his duties; but at the end of our sport, and as if by way of bidding adieu to us, ducks of all kinds rose above our heads in clouds so dense, that we had no time to reload. When our firing ceased, we had so entirely forgotten the condition of our boat, that, in consequence of a too energetic movement on the part of Ermolaï to secure a duck which was lying half dead on the water, the boat inclined to one side, and the water running in, we began to fill rapidly. We all at once cried, "Gently," but it was too late; and in two minutes we were up to the chin, and our countless victims floated around, threatening to suffocate us. Now, I cannot recall the piteous appearance of my companions without laughter, and it is probable that my own was not much better; for, at the moment of our immersion, laughter was the last thing I was

thinking of. Every one held his gun above his head, and Soutchok also, doubtless through a habit of imitating others, held his long pole high in the air. Ermolaï first broke silence.

"Pooah," he bawled, spitting out the water, "here is a pretty mess! It is all your fault, you old demon," he said, addressing Soutchok furiously, "with your *boat*, forsooth. . . Pooah!"

"Pardon me," muttered the old man.

"And you," resumed Ermolaï, addressing Vladimir, "you bright fellow, why did you stop baling the water? Yes, you, you, you. . ."

Vladimir thought of everything but replying. He trembled like a leaf; his mouth was open, and there was a feeble smile of stupor on his face. Adieu to all his eloquence! adieu to his exquisite tact and refined politenesses! adieu to his sense of dignity!

The cursed raft did not balance itself under our feet with much stability. At the moment of sinking, the water had felt extremely cold, but it was so no longer. When the first alarm was over, I looked on every side. Ten paces from us, in the form of a horse shoe, there was a bank of reeds, across which, at the points where it was lowest, I could see the bank. It was at a considerable distance, and our case was a serious one. "What are we to do?" I said to Ermolaï.

"In the first place, it is clear that we cannot spend the night in this way," he replied. "I must see. . . . Hold that," he said to Vladimir; "take care of my gun. Good! Now I shall go and try to find some fordable place; there may possibly be one."

He took the pole from Soutchok, and set out towards the bank, taking great care as he moved his feet not to press heavily on an insecure bottom.

"Can you swim?" I cried.

"No," he answered from behind the reedy banks which he had fortunately cleared.

"Then he will be the first drowned," said Soutchok coldly, who in truth was not so much alarmed at his position as at the future effects of our wrath. He had now become indifferent, and began to blow and puff, but did not alter his position.

Ermolaï gave no sign of life for about an hour—an hour which appeared to us an age. At first we kept shouting to him. His responses became rare, and at last ceased altogether. In the village we heard vespers sounding. We ceased talking, and did not even look at each other. The ducks fluttered in great numbers round our heads, and some of them seemed to wish to attack us; but they suddenly mounted into the air perpendicularly, and flew to a distance. We began to feel all benumbed. Soutchok closed his eyes like a man falling asleep.

At last Ermolaï re-appeared. You may imagine our joy. "Well?"

"Well, come along, I have found firm footing extending to the very bank. Forward. . . No, wait a moment."

He fumbled in his pocket, and drawing out a piece of string, tied hundreds of ducks by the leg, and set out in advance. Vladimir followed; Soutchok came last. It was about two hundred yards to the bank. Ermolaï marched on boldly, and without slackening his pace. He had observed so accurately the route which we were to take, that he was continually calling out to us, "To the left; take care, there is a pool on the right; there is a large hole there; to the right, else you will sink in the mud." The water sometimes was as high as our mouths; and twice Soutchok, who was the shortest man among us, could not find

ground, and the bubbles appeared over the spot where he sank. "Courage! come on," shouted Ermolaï, to inspire energy into him; and Soutchok, restored to hope, became almost a swimmer. We gained firm footing at last. Even in the last extremity, the peasant had not the boldness, so very natural in the circumstances, to take hold of my skirt.

Worn out, covered with mud, soaked into the very bones, we rejoiced to find ourselves once more on the bank.

Two hours after, we were seated (more or less dry) in a large hay shed, and were preparing to sup on what the village could afford. My coachman Jerondill, a very lazy fellow, difficult to rouse, dreamy, or rather sleepy, stood at the large door of the shed, and regaled Soutchok with his tobacco. Coachmen in Russia are friends at once. Soutchok puffed and puffed, but was evidently ill at ease. He coughed, spat, and puffed again. I suppose he found it a great luxury after the bath. Vladimir, being of a somewhat lymphatic temperament, had a gloomy expression, his head hanging to one side; and he spoke little. Ermolaï zealously wiped and dried our two guns. The dogs wagged their tails in expectation of an ortolan; the horses neighed under an open shed. The sun was descending; its last rays were tinging the west with a magnificent scarlet; golden clouds were spread over the sky, then expanding, they grew more and more attenuated, till they had melted away into slender little curls; from the village there came the sound of national songs.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEEJINA LOUGH.—POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS IN RUSSIA.

It was a beautiful July day, one of those days seen only in settled fine weather. Immediately after day-break the sky is perfectly serene; the dawn does not come forth in a vast glare of light, but with a modest vermeil tint; the sun does not seem to be of fire or of red-hot iron, as in the dog-days, nor of a dark purple —a sure sign of storms—but its rays are soft and clear; it appears to shine from behind a thin veil of pearly whiteness; its beams are invigorating; it seems to be bathed in light vapours called forth by itself from the joyful earth. The colour of the horizon is light, and of a pale lilac; the same everywhere and throughout the day. Nowhere can the least cloud omening bad weather be seen, except, perhaps, some thin clouds in light blue strips, descending in the far distance, and carrying with them a light rain hardly perceptible. In the evening the light clouds disappear; the last of them fall down on the eastern horizon in rose-tinted flakes, opposite to the setting sun; while above the spot where the sun has sunk in untroubled glory—as calmly as it rose in the morning—a purple light dwells for a few minutes in the heavens, and the evening star comes out, but with a doubting face, and with a soft and still uncertain

light. On such days all colours are soft and clear without being brilliant; everything is impressed with a modest pathos. The heat is, however, sometimes powerful, and the sloping fields send out a light sort of mist; but the low winds dissipate the accumulated heat, and one may see on the roads and on the fallow land, high white columns of whirling dust—a certain symptom of settled fair weather. The pure dry air breathes by fits odours of absinth, rye, and buckwheat. No moistness prevails in the atmosphere till after midnight.—Such are the days which the labourer sighs for in the time of harvest.

It was on a day of this kind that I was shooting partridges in the district of Tchensk, which forms a part of the government of Toula. I was very successful; my game-bag was so crammed that the belt pained my shoulder very much, and weighed heavily on my chest. The stars were beginning to come out, and in the still luminous atmosphere mists began to gather and to spread over the landscape, which might not be unattended with danger, especially as I was exhausted by a day's hard shooting. I therefore decided on immediately returning to my shooting-box. I crossed with long strides an immense track of ground covered with bushes and copse-wood, climbed a little hill, and expected to see from it the plain I had so often crossed, the little wood on the right, and the village church in the distance, but, to my great disappointment, a part of the country completely unknown to me met my view. Below me stretched a narrow plain; right before me rose, like a wall, a thick grove of aspens. I stopped in astonishment: "Ah!" thought I, "I have lost my way; I must have kept too much to the left." I descended the hill quickly. Arrived at the foot of it, I felt myself surrounded by a malignant humid

vapour, such as is perceived in old vaults. The tall thick grass that grew at the bottom of the valley was covered with a shroud of whitish vapour, resembling a lake of milky water; it would have been imprudent to cross it. I turned to the left, and skirted the aspen thicket. By this time the bats were wheeling in mysterious circles above the tops of the aspens, while a goshawk rose perpendicularly from the ground, without paying any attention to the motions of these birds of the night, and flew off in haste to regain its nest. "I shall soon get out of this scrape," I said to myself; "there must be a road not far from this; I must have gone a good mile out of my way."

At length I reached the end of the wood, but there still appeared no traces of any road; low tufts of some herb or other were scattered here and there in my path; I was astonished that they had not been mowed down. Beyond, but in the far distance, I thought I could perceive a boundless plain—an uninhabited desert. I stopped again: "Here is a misfortune! Where am I now?" I said aloud. I went over in my mind the track which I had pursued during the day. "Ah! yes; I see where I am now! these must be the Parakhink bushes, and that is the Sindeef Wood. But how have I happened to lose my reckoning in this way?.... it is very strange; in the meantime I must keep to the right."

I went to the right, through the bushes. Meanwhile the night was growing darker, the sky was covered with what seemed a heavy storm-cloud, the air was becoming thicker above and below; I perceived that I had reached a path very much overgrown with herbs, and difficult to travel, but still a path; of course I followed it as carefully as I could. All around me lay in unimaginable silence, broken only at

unfrequent intervals by the long-drawn cry of the quail. At times, too, some little night-bird, flying low and without noise, would almost strike against me, and then fly off in terrified haste. I worked my way through the bushes, and found myself on the edge of the plain. I could hardly distinguish objects at a distance; a greyish white fog was lying along the plain; beyond, dull clouds moved about, and heaped themselves in immense moving masses. My steps sounded dully in the cold, dense atmosphere. The bleak sky was now succeeded by the deep blue of night, and the stars appeared one after the other in slow succession.

What I had taken for a wood was but a range of low hills. "Heavens! where am I?" I stopped a third time, and looked inquiringly at Diana, a white English bitch, certainly the most intelligent of all quadrupeds. But the most intelligent of quadrupeds, wagging her tail, and moving her eyelids quickly, in answer to my look, knew no more than I did about the country. I rushed on in despair. I rounded the hill, and found myself in a valley that bore marks of the plough. A strange feeling seized me. This valley had the regular appearance of a pot, very wide at the mouth. At the bottom were lying, as if they had been placed there by design, enormous blocks of white stone—one would have said that they were ranged there for the council-meetings of mysterious beings. All was silent and sad in this hollow; the sky above it appeared flat and melancholy. A feeble breath of wind murmured plaintively among the stones. I hurried away, and climbed a height, from which I looked round in all directions. Up to this moment I had not given up the hope of finding my way home, but now I had to admit that I was completely lost; and, no longer making any attempt to recognise the features of the country, I walked forward at hazard,

guiding my steps by the positions of the stars. I travelled in this way quarter of an hour, not without fatigue. I thought I had never seen such solitudes—not a light to be seen in the distance, not a sound in the air. One hill succeeded another; then came boundless plains; then bushes, which seemed to rise out of the earth, to scratch and wound my face as I proceeded. I began to think that the only course to be taken was to look out for some tree, or some little spot carpeted with moss, and lie down there to wait the end of this miserable night.

I was engaged in thinking about this, when suddenly I found myself on the brink of a frightful precipice; I had just time to draw back. Before me I discovered an immense plain. A broad river bounded it in an immense semicircle, that swept from the point where I was standing. The water had the brilliancy of polished steel, and this brilliancy marked its course; although less distinct in some places than in others. The hill on which I was, stood out in dark brown on the deep azure of the sky, and descended almost perpendicularly right below me, not far from the river, which seemed like a motionless mirror at the foot of the traveller. On my right rose the smoke of two small bivouac fires, not far from each other. Around me I could discern the shadows of people moving; at moments I could distinguish even the curly head of some youngster.

At last I knew where I was. The plain before me was a prairie well known in this part of the country, under the name of *Beejina Lougah.** I had to give up the idea of reaching my house, the more as I was excessively tired. I resolved to go up to the bivouac, and wait for the morning among the people I saw there, and who n I took to be travelling merchants. I descended the hill without

* The Horse-prairie.

accident; but I had hardly let go the last branch of brambles that I had taken hold of to help me in my way down, when suddenly two large white dogs rushed towards me, barking furiously. The clear voices of children were audible from the fires, and two or three boys were in a moment on the *qui vive*. . . I replied to their shouts. . . They ran up to me, calling in their dogs, which had been roused from their slumbers by the appearance of Diana.

I was mistaken in taking the company for merchants; they were the peasant boys of the neighbouring village watching a taboun.* In the hot weather of the dog-days, it is the custom in our country to take the horses out at night to pasture in the prairie; the gadflies and other insects prevent them from eating during the day. It is capital fun for the young villagers to drive the horses to the prairie before night-fall, and bring them back in the morning safe and sound. Riding bare-backed on the most spirited colts, they gallop off, laughing and shouting, throwing their arms about, every limb alive with joy and merriment. A brown column of fine dust follows their track; in the distance one hears the sound of their merry gallop; the horses run with their ears erect; while, in advance of all, his tail streaming in the wind, careers some rough, powerful horse, uncombed and uncurried, with his hair twisted into inextricable knots.

Telling the children that I had lost my way, I seated myself on a large stone beside them. They asked me where I came from, and were afterwards silent, seated together at a little distance from me. I lay down about six paces from the fire, under a bush almost leafless, and began to observe the surrounding objects. Round the fire there trembled, as if just on the point of expiring, a reddish glow, standing out against the darkness. A small

* A troop of horses turned out to graze without bridles or clogs.

flickering flame shot out now and then from this circle; a thin jet of light would be thrown on the leafless branches of the wild osier, and disappear in a moment; long points of shadow fell in their turn near the fire; and the darkness struggled with the light. At times, from the increasing obscurity, would suddenly appear the brown or white head of a horse, looking at us with an air of stupid attention, as he paused for a moment in his browsing, and then as suddenly disappear in the darkness, though we could still hear his munching and snorting. From the spot where we were, it was impossible to distinguish the objects lying in deep shade, so that everything at a distance seemed covered with an impenetrable black curtain; but farther off, on the horizon, we could see long confused spots, which were no doubt forests and hills. The moonless sky, dark, but pure, bent solemnly over us, visible to infinite depths. The breast rose and fell voluptuously, breathing those fresh odours—the odours of a Russian summer night. Not a sound was to be heard, except now and then, in the river that flowed near us, the splashing of large fish chasing each other, the light rattling of reeds in a bend of the bank, or the low crackling of our fires.

The children were seated round the bivouac fires, in company with the two dogs that had been so eager to attack me. It was some time before these two brave guardians could accustom themselves to my presence, and they now and then growled at me from their lairs near the fire. There were five boys—Fédia (Theodore), Pavloucha (Paul), Ileoucha (Elias), Kostia (Constantine), and Vania (Ivan or John). It was from their conversation that I learned their names; and I humbly beg the reader to allow me to introduce him to my young hosts.

The first of them, the young Fédia, is a boy you would guess to be about fourteen years old. His features are

delicate and regular, his hair curls naturally, his eye is brilliant, his look bold and independent, and his countenance animated by a smile, half serious, half comic. His whole appearance seems to tell you at once that he belongs to a family in good circumstances, and has come out to-night only for his own pleasure. He had on a blouse of striped calico, edged with a cord of a rustic yellow colour; above it a little armiak, the sleeves of which hung loose, and which was fastened round his neck. His blouse was fitted to his waist by a blue belt, from which hung a little horn comb. His boots, that reached only up to the calf, were his own boots, and not his father's.*

Paul or Pavloucha, the second, had black dishevelled hair, grey eyes, prominent cheek-bones, a pale complexion marked with freckles, a mouth large but regular, an enormously large head—or, to use an Orel comparison, as big as a beer-pot—and a short, thick-set figure. There was nothing, in truth, to praise in his appearance; but the young fellow pleased me much, notwithstanding, for I was attracted at once by his frank and intelligent look; and the clear tone of his voice seemed to indicate some firmness of character. His costume was not more elegant than his head-dress; it consisted of a coarse dirty blouse, with trousers patched at the knees and about the waist.

The physiognomy of the third boy, Ileoucha or Elias, was insignificant enough. His prominent mouth,

* In the country, the father's boots are used by his wife and all the other members of the family—permission being first asked and received from him. Even in the capital towns of the districts, one may often see, when it rains, a troop of young village-girls in holiday dress, each with a pair of boots in her hand, or hanging on her shoulder. These are the family boots; they must not put them on when it is raining.

weak nose and chin, short-sighted look, stupid and restless air, lips closed and immovable, meeting eyebrows, his continual winking before the fire, his flaxen hair that hung down from beneath a cap of coarse felt, and which he was always pushing behind his ears—all this was anything but agreeable to the observer. He had shoes of plaited bark, with narrow strips of cloth bound round his legs above the ankle, in the fashion of gaiters; a triple cord was passed round his waist, and kept tight his little frock, which was decent enough. Elias and Paul seemed both about twelve years of age.

Constantine (Kostia) was evidently not more than ten years old. He interested me, however, by his pensive air and sad look; his face was small, thin, and peaked—the lower part tapered like the nose of a squirrel, and I could hardly distinguish his lips. What especially made a strange impression, was his large black eyes, that shone with a melting brilliancy, and seemed as if about to speak, although he never uttered a word. He was little, of a delicate complexion, and poorly clad.

The fifth boy, Vania or John, had escaped my notice at first; he was lying on the ground, rolled up in a square mat, and very seldom did he put out his little curled head from beneath this covering. This child could hardly be more than seven years old.

I lay under the bush, a little apart, observing the boys. A pot was suspended above one of the fires; they were cooking potatoes in it. Paul was attending to them, and, on his knees before the fire, now and then with a splinter of wood moved the potatoes about in the boiling water. Fédia was lying on a slightly sloped piece of ground, leaning on his elbow, with his armiak above him. Elias lay beside the little Kostia,

and kept winking with an air of great attention. Kostia raised his head a little, and seemed to look at something in the distance. Vania remained motionless under his mat. For myself, I pretended to be asleep. Gradually the boys resumed their conversation.

At first they chatted about this or that, of to-morrow's work, of this or that horse. Fédia turned suddenly to Elias, and, resuming a conversation probably interrupted by my appearance, he said to him,—

"You say that you have seen the *domovoï?*"*

"No, I have never seen him, nor has anybody," answered Ileoucha, in a feeble and trembling voice, that corresponded perfectly with the expression of his features; "but I have heard him, and I am not the only one that has heard him."

"And where does he stay when he comes to you?" asked Paul.

"In the tub-house—the place where they put the tubs, opposite the mill-wheel, near the wall in the paper-manufactory."

"Oh! you work in the manufactory, do you?"

"Yes; my brother and little Avdéa, and I work a little with the glazers."

"Oh! so you are work-people."

"Well! but how did you hear the domovoï?" asked Fédia.

"I'll tell you how: there were my brother Avdéa, and Fédor Mikhéïtch, and Ivan Koçoï, and Ivan of Fair-Hills, and Ivan Soukhoroukof, and some more boys, all working together that day; we were just going to separate in the evening, it was very late, when the foreman said to us—'You must come back to-morrow early; there is a great deal of work to do. Why go

* The domovoï-doukh is the familiar spirit of the house, like the Scottish Brownie.

away at all, my boys? You had better remain here...' So we remained and slept together in the tub-house. We had just lain down, when Avdéa said to us—'What if we should have a visit from the domovoï!'... The moment Avdéa spoke we heard above our heads a curious sound; we were on the lower storey, and the sound was right above us; then we heard it on the wheel; it tramped and groaned, the planks bent and creaked; the domovoï passed again above our heads, and then the water grumbled and groaned, and struck against the wheel; the wheel turned .... and yet the foreman had fastened it carefully before he went to bed. But the wheel turned a good many times, and then stopped, and the water did not push against it any more; the domovoï was at the door above us; then it came down the ladder ... slowly, for it is heavy, the steps of the ladder creaked under it .... Then it was just behind our door ... what is it waiting there for? We looked ... the door opened wide. We were half-dead with fear; we still looked ... nothing at all! And then we saw near a tub a spoon moving about with a string tied to it. It raised itself up, then dived into a tub; then marched along through the air by itself, sometimes moving up and down, just as if somebody was cleaning it, then it was put back into its place. After that, near another tub, a hook was broken off, and, a moment after, it was replaced. At last, it was as if somebody had returned to the door, and began coughing and bleating like a sheep, and crying like a bittern. .... We had all crawled together into a heap—one on the other, like bags of lead. Oh! we had a jolly fright, I can tell you."

"What made the domovoï cough in that way?" said Paul.

"I don't know; perhaps the damp ..."

After some moments of silence, Fédia said, "Are the potatoes ready?"

Paul tried one: "No, not yet." Then, turning quickly towards the river, he added, "How he leapt! did you hear? It must have been a pike." Then looking into the sky: "Look, look, a shooting star!"

"Boys," said Constantine in his weak voice, "listen, till I tell you what my aunt told me the other day."

"Very well, we are listening," said Fédia, with a patronising air.

"You all know Gavrîlo, the carpenter of the Sloboda?"*

"Yes, yes . . . well?"

"Do you know why he is so melancholy—why he never speaks to anybody? I'll tell you why: He went out one day, my aunt told me, to gather nuts; he gathered a great many, but he lost his way in the wood. . . . He went on and on, God knows where; he stopped, looked about him, thought, then walked and walked on . . . but no, he could not find his way, and night was come. He seated himself under a tree: 'Well,' he said, 'I shall wait here for daylight.' He wrapped himself up and fell asleep. He was in a deep sleep, when he heard a voice calling, 'Gavrîlo! Gavrîlo!' He rubbed his eyes, looked . . . there was nothing. He goes to sleep again, and again he heard somebody calling him. He looks about him more attentively . . . and at last he sees before him, on a branch, a *roussalka*† laughing and laughing till it almost burst. . . . The moon was shining very clearly, and the will-o'-the-wisp himself was shining like the moon; and the roussalka was very white—white and glittering as if it were all of silver. It saw that poor

* The main street of the village. † A wood fairy.

Gavrîlo was half dead with fear; and it laughed and laughed, and called him through its hand in this way . . . Gavrîlo rose, and was going, just imagine it, to approach the roussalka, when, God be thanked, he changed his mind, and began to seek for his baptismal cross with both hands, but it was very difficult to find! Ah! boys, he said himself, that his hand felt like stone, and his fingers were quite stiff. . . . But at last he brought out his cross, and placed it on his blouse, in the middle of his breast. The roussalka didn't laugh any more . . . it began to cry . . . and to shed tears. It wiped its face with its green hair—as green as grass. Gavrîlo, not so much frightened now, looked at it for a long time, and then said to it, 'Eh! green leaf, you can speak, can you? Come, tell me what you are weeping for.' The roussalka answered, 'Dear little man, you should not, you should not have touched your cross; you would have lived with me till the end of the world; but I weep, and I must suffer a great deal; but I shall not suffer alone, you will suffer too, you will, till time ends.' And Gavrîlo saw it sink and disappear . . . and he understood that very moment how he was to find his way out of the wood; he was at the edge of it in two minutes. . . . Since that night, he has never been merry, he has never felt any pleasure in living."

"Cursed roussalka!" said Fédia, after a minute's silent reflection; "but how does it happen that vermin like that can hurt the soul of a Christian? for he did not obey it; he did not yield to it."

"It is quite the same; besides, it is true," answered Kostia . . . "and Gavrîlo said that the voice of the roussalka was sad and mournful like a frog's."

"And it was your aunt that told you all that?" said Fédia.

"Yes, I was in bed, but I was listening; I did not lose a single word."

"It is very curious. But what makes him so sad now? Did he touch it? He must have pleased the cursed thing, since it called him."

"Yes, he pleased it! . . You know it wanted to tickle him; that is what it wanted; that is what the roussalkas do."

"But can there be any roussalkas here?" said Fédia.

"No," answered Kostia; "here, it is an open part of the country . . . and besides, there is the river."

All reflected in silence. Suddenly, in the distance, sounded a long cry of sorrow and anguish—one of those voices of the night, those indefinable and inconceivable sounds which are born of silence itself, which rise, seem to hang somewhere in the air, and then die slowly away. You listen; it seems nothing, and yet a sound has struck upon your ear. At this time it was as if, far away on the horizon, some one had shouted, and then in the forest another had answered in a thin, short burst of laughter; and a feeble hissing sound seemed to fly along on the surface of the river.

The boys looked at each other. . . They shuddered.

"The cross protect us!" murmured Ilia.

"Ah! boys," cried Paul, "are you not afraid? . . . But, come, let us see whether the potatoes are ready."

Four little heads bent above the pot, and they began to devour the smoking potatoes. Ivan alone did not move.

"Well! won't you have any?" said Paul. But he would not even draw his arms out of the folds of his mat.

The pot was not long in being emptied.

"Do you know, boys," said Ileoucha, "what happened at Barnabitzis near us?"

"Beside the old wall?" said Fédia.

"Yes, yes, at the old deserted wall. . . . An abominable place! all surrounded with hollows, and ravines, and grottoes . . . and great numbers of adders and snakes."

"Well! what happened there? tell us."

"Perhaps you don't know, Fédia, that there is a man buried there—a man who was drowned a long time ago, when the pond was deep. The body was buried on the bank. The grave is not very easily found, but there is still a little rising to be seen on the earth. Well, listen. The steward sent for the huntsman Ermill some days ago, and ordered him to go to the post—it is always Ermill that is sent to the post. He has not a single dog to train, not even a dog to himself; they all died; not one of them could live with him or near him. A pretty huntsman, isn't he? So Ermill went to the post; and when he got to town he staid there a little; and he had a good deal in his head when he mounted his horse to go back to the village. Night came on; but afterwards it became very clear, for it was full moon, and Ermill had reached, though he did not know very well how, the old wall; he had to pass this nasty place. He went on without hesitation; he arrived at the grave of the drowned man; he looked at it, and saw lying upon it a pretty lamb with nice white curled wool. The little animal began to walk up and down on the grave. The huntsman Ermill is a good-hearted man; he thought that it would lose itself if it stayed in this evil place, so he got down from his horse and took it up. The lamb was perfectly quiet in his arms. Ermill approached his horse, but he backed, and kicked, and flung, and snorted, and neighed, and shook his head; but Ermill soon brought him to reason. So he remounted, and went along with the pretty lamb

on the saddle before him. Ermill looked at the lamb, and it looked at him straight in the face. This seemed very strange to Ermill, whose memory was a little confused, but who, for all that, could not remember that he had ever heard of sheep looking in this way, straight into people's faces. But he settled with himself that this was a peculiar case. He paid no more attention to it; he carressed it; and, quite pleased to find the wool so soft, he said to the lamb, 'Bêacha! bêacha!' and then the lamb immediately showed his teeth, and said the same, 'Béacha! béacha!'. . . ."

The boy had not finished these two last words when the dogs leaped up together, and, bounding off at a furious rate, disappeared in the darkness. All the boys were at once on the alert; even Vania came out from beneath his matting. Paul, shouting at the top of his voice, shot after the dogs, whose barkings were every minute becoming more and more distant. I heard the mad and disordered galloping of the terrified taboun. Paul redoubled his shouts of encouragement to the dogs: "Séeri! joutka! seize 'em! seize 'em!" A few moments after, the barkings ceased; the last shouts of Paul were but faintly heard in the distance. This silence continued for fully quarter of an hour; the boys looked at each other with an expression of uncertainty. . . At last we heard the gallop of a horse that stopped suddenly just at our feet, and Paul, by the help of the mane, vaulted to the ground. The two dogs also bounded into the illuminated circle, where they lay down with their deep red tongues lolling out.

"What was it? What did you see?" cried the boys.

"Nothing," replied Paul, signing with his arm a dismissal to his horse. "The dogs came upon the trace of some beast or other; I think it was a wolf,

but I could not see in the dark," he added coolly, and then began to breathe hard.

I could not help admiring this little fellow, he looked so handsome at this moment, plain as he was. His countenance, animated by his rapid run, was full of different emotions, and shone with resolution and intrepidity. Without even a stick in his hand, in the dark, though he believed that some danger was near, he had run without hesitation against a wolf, perhaps several. . . . I thought, while I looked at him standing before the fire, so calm, so modest, "What a charming boy!"

"And were there any wolves, eh?" said the chicken-hearted Kostia.

"There are always some wolves in the fields in the night time," answered Paul negligently, "but they are not troublesome except in winter."

And he took his old seat near the fire. While arranging himself at his ease on the ground, one of his arms happened to fall on the back of one of the dogs, which, happy in this accidental caress, cast at Paul a look of proud gratitude, and remained thus for a long time without turning his head, tired as he was with his long chase.

Vania, the youngest of the party, rolled himself up in his matting again.

"Ah! Ileoucha, what were you talking about? you remember," said Fédia, who, as the son of a rich peasant, thought himself entitled to be entertained with stories. He spoke very little himself, as if he wished to guard his acknowledged dignity. "You stopt when the dogs leaped up... Yes, yes, it was about a haunted place near your house."

"Barnabitzis? Ah! spirits have been seen there too. More than once they have seen the dead old

lord walking there. They say he goes in a long cafetan; he stalks along, sighs, and looks on the ground, God knows for what. One night, father Trofim met him, and said to him, 'My lord Ivan Ivanytch, what are you looking for on the ground?'"

"What! Trofim dared to speak to him!" said Fédia astonished.

"Yes, he spoke to him."

"Well, he is a famous old fellow, is old Trofim. And what did the dead man say?"

"'I am looking for the magic herb,' said the spirit, in a dull, hollow voice. Yes, he said the magic herb. 'And what do you want with the sorcerer's herb, when you are dead, my lord Ivan Ivanytch?' 'The earth is choking me, I am suffocating below it,' said the dead man. . . . 'I must get out of that, Trofim.'"

"An odd old fellow," said Fédia—"dead and wants air! I suppose he did not live long enough."

"It is astonishing," said Kostia; "I thought that nobody could see the dead except on Roditelskaïa Saturday."*

"One can see the dead at any time," answered Ileoucha confidently, who, so far as I observed, was best acquainted with the village traditions. "Only, when Roditelskaïa Saturday comes, you can see the people who are marked for death, and all these people must die before the year ends. You have only to go and seat yourself on the steps in front of the church, and look, without moving an inch, straight before you. If you do that, you will see everybody whose turn is come to die. Old Ouliana went last year and sat on the steps."

* The day on which the Russians celebrate the memory of their deceased relations.

"Ah! and did she see anybody?" asked Kostia eagerly.

"Well, at first she sat a long time—a very long time—motionless, looking, listening, but without seeing or hearing anybody . . . . only she thought she heard a dog barking and howling strangely from somewhere, it seemed to her from the bottom of a vault . . . . At last, a little boy in a blouse passed her on the path; she saw him, and following him attentively with her eye, she recognised Fédoci's little son."

"Little Ivan, who died last spring?"

"Yes, it was he. He was walking with his head down, so she did not know who he was at first . . . . but she knew him after he passed her. Some time after him, a baba passed slowly. Ouliana knew her at once, I mean she recognised herself; it was herself, Ouliana, that was walking on the path."

"What! it was herself that was walking below, and herself that she saw?" said Fédia.

"Yes, herself, what of it?"

"Well, but she is not dead yet."

"But the year is not ended yet. Come to-morrow to our village and look at her; her soul and body hardly hold together."

The boys were silent. Paul threw a handful of dry wood on the fire; the branches falling raised myriads of sparks, then began to blacken, twisted, cracked, emitted jets of grey smoke, with here and there peaks of lighted gas that gradually grew larger and mixed together, and then the whole mass broke into flame, sending up a fierce, red, roaring blaze, mixed with showers of sparks. A dove flew out of the darkness right to the crest of the flame, round which it flew three times, and then disappeared, clapping its wings loudly.

"Ah!" said Paul, "there is a dove that has lost its

way home; it will fly about till it finds a safe place to wait in until morning comes."

"But, tell me, Paul . . . mayn't it be," said Kostia, "the soul of a good man going up to heaven, eh?"

"Perhaps . . . perhaps it may," answered Paul, throwing another handful of branches on the other fire.

"Paul," said Fédia, who never liked any interruption to the stories he was enjoying, "tell me, if you please, whether you saw at Chalachof, the . . . what we saw, the . . . eclipse, I think they call it."

"O! . . . when the sun is covered with black! I know . . . yes, yes, we saw it."

"You were terribly frightened, surely?"

"Yes, and not we poor peasants only. Our bârin had told us himself beforehand that he was going to see the—the eclipse . . . and the moment he saw the night coming in place of the day, he was very much afraid himself they say. There is an old woman in his kitchen, when she saw the night coming at that time, she thought that there would not be any more cooking at all; so she took pots, and bowls, and dishes, and sauce-pans, and pitched them all into the big oven, muttering, 'Nobody has any need to eat on the day of judgment.' And the vegetables and the meal too followed the pots and pans. And in all the village they said that white wolves were going to cover the whole earth, and with the help of the birds of prey, eat up all the men and women, and that we should first see *Trichka* —you know Trichka—that the curate calls Antichrist."

"Well, but what is this Trichka?" asked Kostia.

"Don't you know?" said Ileoucha with warmth; "you are a famous blockhead, not to know who Trichka is! What do the people of your village do when they are all sitting together? they are as dumb as the seats they sit on, I suppose. Trichka! he's a wonderful man who

will come to our villages some day. And how is he a wonderful man? why, nobody ever will be able to catch him, or to hurt him; the whole baptized world would like to seize him, and they will come out of their yards with pitchforks and cudgels, and chains and cords, and try to catch him and chain him, and trample him under foot; but he will make them all squint, so that they will strike, and kick, and seize each other, while they fancy they are hurting him. Do you know now? Ah! but that is not all; he will let them put him in prison; well, they will guard him and keep him always in sight; he will ask a little water to drink—they will bring him some in a wooden bowl, and then he shrivels himself up in the air, plunges into the bowl . . . . and you may look for him as much as you like! They will load him with irons—he gives himself a little shake, and all the rings lie broken about him. This Trichka, I tell you, will run through all the hamlets, and villages, and towns; he is a shrewd fellow; he will make a fool of everybody, and yet make everybody like him. There will not be any use trying to injure him. . . . Yes, yes, he is a cunning, malicious, very wicked being."

"It is quite true," replied Paul, without animation or haste, "it is quite true; it is the very same Trichka that our people are expecting. The old people said, 'If the eclipse takes place that the bârins talk about, Trichka will make his appearance for certain.' The eclipse commenced; all the people came out of their houses, and spread themselves in the street, on the roads, and in the fields. They waited to see it. At our village the ground is high, and we can see a great distance all round us . . . Not an eye was closed . . . Then, all of a sudden, not far from the Sloboda, on the path over the hill we call the Raccourci, there appeared, and then began

to descend the hill, a strangely shaped man, with a head as big as his body . . . We all looked, and winked, and looked, and everybody began to cry, 'Ohi! ohi! ohi! Trichka! Trichka!' and they scattered in every direction—brr, brr, brr . . . like rats. Our starosta* leaped into a ditch up to his chin; his wife ran and crept below the carriage-gate, crying as if she were possessed, and frightening even the dog out of his wits; he broke his chain, bolted into the garden, over the gate, and ran for the wood. Father Kouzmira ran among the oats, lay down, and began to imitate, as well as he could, the cry of the quail. 'The enemy of souls,' thought he, 'the angry devil, will never think of laying hold of a poor corn-bird.' So they were all terrified almost to death. . . . Just fancy; the man that was coming to the village, just as much frightened as the rest, was Vavill, our cooper. He had gone to the town to buy a big pail bound with iron hoops, and he had put it on his head for convenience' sake."

The five boys laughed at the adventure, and then remained a moment perfectly silent, as one may often notice when people are conversing in the open air. I looked round on every side; over the wide prairie the night reigned silent and solemn; to the freshness of advanced evening had succeeded the healthy and pleasant coolness of midnight—its reign was to continue over the country for several hours longer; we had still some time to wait for the first rose-tints of the dawn, the first signs of the awakening of nature. The moon would not rise for some hours yet. The countless stars of heaven seemed to be running a race with each other, as if they had a rendezvous in the milky way, which they wished but were unable to reach, and while looking at them as they gradually neared the steeple, I seemed to feel under me

* The representative head of the village.

the rapid incessant revolution of the earth. . . . I was dreaming thus, when a sudden, piercing, mournful cry rose twice above the river; some minutes after, the same cry was repeated, but farther off.

Kostia shuddered.

"What is it?" he said.

"It is the heron," answered Paul, very quietly.

"The heron? the heron? . . . . But, Paul, what was I told yesterday evening? . . . . that . . . but perhaps you know yourself, Paul."

"What are you talking about? Come, tell us."

"Well, you know, I was going from Kamennaïa-Grad to Chachkino; I went along our hazel-wood, and then I took the road by the low meadow, you know, down at the place where the meadow borders on the quick turn of the river . . . . You remember that there is just beside it a boutchilo,* and a large part of the boutchilo is changed into reed-marshes? well, I was passing this boutchilo, when I heard not far from me cries of 'Ouh! ouh! ouh! ohi!' They were so sad, so mournful . . . . Oh, my God! brothers, my heart was at my throat, and my legs could hardly carry me. It was late; the voice always followed me; ah! I wept so sore, I wept till I thought I had shed all the tears in my head. Tell me, boys, what do you think it could have been?"

"About a year ago," said Paul, "some thieves drowned the field-watchman Akim there; perhaps it was his soul shrieking."

"Ah! I did not know that the thieves had drowned poor Akim there; if I had known, I should not have been so much frightened."

"Besides, I must tell you," added Paul, "I have

* A boutchilo is a deep pool of water left after the inundation of a river.

heard people say that there are little frogs, whose cry very much resembles, the cries of a human being in great pain and sorrow."

"Frogs? no Paul; it was not frogs: what frogs do you mean? . . . ."

The heron again flung its peculiar cry above the river.

"There is another, now," said Kostia, involuntarily; "it must be the cry of the leechie."*

"The leechie doesn't cry; it is dumb," said Elias immediately; "it does nothing but strike one hand against the other, and clack with its tongue."

"I suppose you have seen it, eh?" asked the self-important Fédia in a tone of raillery.

"No, I never saw it, comrade, and God preserve me from ever seeing it! but other people have. Only the other day, he met one of our moujiks at the edge of the wood; he pushed him and pushed him towards the thicket; the moujik had to go round the field ten times, always trying to keep away from the thicket, but he could not get to his cottage till the sun rose, and he was dreadfully knocked up, I can tell you."

"And he saw the leechie?"

"Yes! he says that the leechie is very tall and very brown, always covered from head to foot in the bark of a tree, and that one can never get a fair look at him because he always keeps out of the moon's light, but he keeps looking at you and winking . . . ."

"Oh horrible!" cried Fédia, shuddering and shrugging his shoulders.

"What I can't understand," said Paul, "is that such vermin can breed and continue on the earth as they do."

"Hush! don't say anything ill about him; take

* The leechie is the evil spirit of the woods.

care, he will hear you; he is dumb, but he is not deaf," said Elias, "and he is very revengeful."

After a few minutes' meditation on the necessity of not irritating the wood-goblin, little Vania cried, "O! brothers! look, look! . . . . (The first movement of all was to shudder); look at the stars of the good God! they are like great swarms of bees."

Speaking thus, he drew his fresh little face out of his covering, and leaning on his elbow, fixed his bright gaze on the starry sky. His four wise friends, following his example, raised their innocent faces to the sublime vault, and I remarked with pleasure that it was with reluctance they turned them again towards the ground. But as all contemplation has an end, Fédia, the son of the rich peasant, said to the little Ivan,—

"What news of your sister Aneouta; is she well?"

"Yes," answered Vania, "she is well."

"Ask her, then, why she does not come to see us."

"I don't know what keeps herrr," answered Vania, who had a strong burr.

"Well, tell her to come."

"Yes, I will tell herrr."

"Tell her I have something nice for her."

"And me, will you give me something too?"

"Yes, you too."

Little Johnny sighed, and then said, "No, not to me, I don't want anything; give what you were going to give me, give it to her. She is such a good, good sister." And his head fell softly on the ground again.

Paul rose, and took up in his left hand the empty pot.

"Where are you going?" asked Fédia.

"To the river for water, I am thirsty."

The dogs rose with him, and followed Paul to the river.

"Take care, Paul, and not fall into the river," cried Ileoucha.

"Why should he fall into the water?" said Fédia, "there is no fear of that."

"No fear! no fear! how do you know? Perhaps when he is leaning over and drawing water . . . the Vodianoï* will seize him by the arms and pull him in. And then the people will say, 'He fell in, poor fellow! he fell into the water.' He fell in! it is very easily said . . . Ah! did you hear? something moved over there among the bushes."

They all listened. The bushes and reeds rustled.

"And is it true," said Kostia, "that Akoulina, the poor idiot, has been so since ever she fell into the water?"

"Yes, yes. Isn't she frightful just now? Well, they say she was once a beauty. It was the Vodianoï that disfigured her and spoiled her. He did not expect they would draw her out so soon . . . but he had time, for all that, to twist and deform her as you see."

I have myself met this Akoulina many times. The poor wretch is covered with rags, frightfully lean, with a face as black as coal, haggard eyes, teeth always gnashing. She will stand a long time in one place, no matter where, stamping with her feet on the ground, crossing her bony arms over her breast, and shifting from one leg to the other like a ferocious beast in a confined cage.

"They say," resumed Kostia, "that Akoulina threw herself into the water, because her lover deceived her."

"Quite true."

"And do you remember Vacia?" added Kostia in a sad tone.

"What Vacia do you mean?" said Fédia.

"O! the one that was drowned—drowned in this river. How handsome he was! how handsome! And

* The *Vodianoï*, from *voda*, water, the Undine of the Germans.

Feclista, his mother, loved him so much! Do you know that she felt . . . that she always felt that Vacia would come to his death by the water. Sometimes Vacia went with the rest of us boys, in the summer time, to bathe in the river; and Feclista, every time, kept trembling in such a way. All the other women, without thinking there was any danger, would pass quite tranquilly with their tubs to the washing-place; but Feclista always set her tub on the ground, and cried out to Vacia, 'Come out of the water, my little darling, come out, come here, come, my lamb, come!' How he drowned himself, God knows. He was one day playing on the bank, his mother was not there; she was turning the hay in the meadow. All of a sudden she began to feel uneasy, she ran to the river, she looked about her, she saw bubbles mounting to the top of the water, and Vacia's cap floating . . . floating . . . Since that day Feclista has not been in her right mind. She goes to the place and stretches herself on the ground, and sings a little song, the song that Vacia was always singing, it is *that* she sings, and then she weeps and weeps—God ought to have pity on her."

"Here is Pavloucha coming back," said Fédia.

Paul rejoined his friends; he brought back the pot full. He was very silent at first, and then I heard him murmuring:

"Ah! dear comrades, it is a dreadful thing . . ."

"What is it? What is the matter with you?" said Kostia impetuously.

"I heard in the river the soft voice of Vacia . . ."

The little circle shuddered.

"What do you say? eh? what?" said Kostia, in a wandering tone of voice.

"God is my witness; when I leaned down over the water, I heard just from the bottom of the river, the

voice of Vacia calling to me, 'Pavloucha, Pavloucha, come here, come here!' I drew back quickly; and for all that, you see I have brought back my pot full of fresh clear water."

"Oh! Lord God, Lord God! have mercy on us!" said the four boys crossing themselves; and Paul, after them, crossed himself still more solemnly.

"It must have been the Vodianoï that called you, Paul; it was the Vodianoï," said Fédia; "and imagine, just a minute ago, we were talking of poor Vacia."

"It is. . a . . bad omen, . . a . . bad omen, that," said Ileoucha in a voice broken by emotion.

"Well, what must be will be! God preserve us!" said Paul resolutely, seating himself near the fire. "Nobody can escape from his fate."

The boys sat still as if petrified; Paul's words had produced a profound impression on them. . . . They began to arrange themselves round the fire, and dispose themselves at last to sleep.

"What is that?" said Kostia, raising his eyes.

Paul listened: "Snipes," said he, "that whistling, ... yes, it is a flight of snipes."

"And where are they going to?"

"They are going to the country where there is no winter."

"What! is there any country so very unfortunate?"

"O yes! a warm country."

"Far away?"

"Far, far away; away over the warm seas." Kostia sighed, and an instant afterwards his eyes closed.

Three hours had passed since I joined the boys and began to listen to their chat. Tired as I was, I felt that I could listen to them three hours more; but the silence remained unbroken. The moon appeared; I did not remark her presence at first, she was so thin and pale. But this night, like all the nights of this season, was

not the less magnificent that it wanted the light of the moon. By this time many of the stars had neared the dim horizon, after leaving the sublime elevation they had reached under the mighty vault. Everything was silent in the air and on the earth, as the first hours after midnight always are; a deep and motionless sleep spread over all. The air seemed less impregnated with odours, and a faint moistness wandered in the lower regions of the atmosphere . . . The nights of summer are not long. The fires slept with the tired fancies of the little boys. The dogs took advantage of the silence of our party; the horses, so far as I could perceive by the feeble and uncertain light of the stars, were lying their whole length upon the meadow. My eyelids began to grow heavy . . . and . . . in one moment I fell asleep.

A fresh, light breeze breathed on my face. I opened my eyes . . . . The darkness was disappearing; it was not yet the purple dawn; but the day was breaking. The landscape was becoming visible across the shifting darkness. The greyish white sky began to grow clearer and more cool and blue; the stars shed an uncertain light, like diamonds below gauze, and disappeared; the earth sent up clouds of mist, the leaves began to stir softly; from somewhere, I knew not where, sounds came to me, I could not say what sounds—of voices doubtless—the first voices of the life that still slumbered; a faint breeze—the morning breeze, passed wanderingly, capriciously, lightly over the earth. My body saluted it with a light voluptuous shiver . . . I rose quickly and went up to the boys; they were sleeping soundly beside the white ashes of their dead fires; Paul alone rose, sat up and looked at me.

I bade him good-bye, looked at him for a moment, then bade him good-bye again. I then turned to go home

along the river, whose course was marked by white mists. I had hardly travelled two versts, when all around me, on the wide prairie glistening with dew, on the green hills, from thicket to thicket, and from copse to copse; farther off, too, on the dusty roads, on the bushes bepearled and rainbowed with tears, on the river that was shining out of a deeper and deeper blue under the breaking mist—the dawning day threw up its rays of fiery purple, and then poured forth floods of fresh and resplendent golden light .... A stirring, an awakening, a breathing full of joy and hope—and all living nature burst into voice and song; everywhere large stirring drops of dew displayed their thousand varied lights .... From the distance, pure, clear, distinct, as if bathed in the freshness of the morning, came the sounds of the village church-bell; and almost immediately after galloped up behind me the whole taboun of BEEJINA LOUGH, driven by the five noble little boys. God bless them!

I am sorry to be obliged to add to this narrative, already perhaps too long, that Paul died in the course of the year. But he was not drowned; he was killed by a fall from a horse. It is a pity. Paul was a boy who promised to become an excellent man.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL.—KACIAN.

I CAME back from the field in my little spring car, oppressed by the suffocating heat of a cloudy summer's day. On such days the heat is more oppressive than when the air is clear.

I was dosing in my car in a singularly sullen mood, exposed to the fine and delicate dust which my wheels raised continually from the road . . when all at once I was aroused by the perturbed air and strange excitement of my driver, who, up to this moment, had been slumbering upon a plank a little lower than the seat on which I was reclining. He tugged at the reins, wriggled about on his seat, and commenced growling at his horses, and looking both to the right and left; while I began to look before me on all sides. We were traversing an immense cultivated plain, which happened to be diversified with numerous swells likewise cultivated, and presented to the eye an appearance like the waves of the sea, to one viewing them from a carriage. Looking along the road as far as one could see, you could not perceive a single soul; in the distance, little clumps of birches, with their round and jagged tops, cut off a line almost parallel with the horizon. Narrow pathways ran zig-zag amongst the fields, disappearing at intervals in hollows, and winding round hills; and on

one of these, which some five hundred paces from our present position, seemed to stop our progress, I distinguished something like a procession. This was the object which particularly attracted the attention of my driver.

It was a funeral. Upon the front of a telega, drawn by one horse, which paced slowly along, was seated an old priest; the sacristan by his side was driving; behind the car, four peasants, bare-headed, carried a corpse covered with a shroud of white linen, followed by two women. The feeble and plaintive voice of one of them reached my ear. I listened . . . She seemed to be saying something; it was sad to hear, in the midst of these almost uninhabited plains, this monotonous dirge, broken only by deep sobs. My driver pushed forward; he meant to pass the cortege quickly; everybody knows that it is a bad omen to meet a funeral procession on the road. He had just succeeded in gaining the cross road before the corpse-bearers, when all at once our car received a rough jolt; a crack was heard, and in a moment the car overset. My driver stopped the horses, who were somewhat startled, made an angry gesture with his hand, and spat on the ground.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

He leant down without replying, and without showing any haste.

"But what is the matter?" I repeated.

"The axle is broken, worn through," replied he, sulkily; and he readjusted the bow and the harness of the thiller so roughly, that the horse almost fell on his side; he managed to keep on his legs, however, neighed, shook himself, and began quietly to gnaw his leg below his knee.

I alighted from the car, and began to walk, little

annoyed by the accident. The right wheel was inclined more than half way under the car, and seemed, by great exertions, to hold aloft in the air the little fore-wheel on the left side.

"What is to be done now?"

"See, there is the cause!" said my driver, pointing with his whip to the procession, which had already turned the corner of the cross way, and was approaching us. "I have always seen it so; it is a sure sign, meeting a dead body . . ."

He began to tease the thiller again; but the animal, perceiving his bad humour from his outrageous conduct and voice, stood motionless as a statue, only from time to time quietly moving his tail from right to left. I went up to him, and stopped before the wheel, which had been forced a little way under the britchka.

Quietly and sadly the funeral procession, which had rejoined us, descended upon the coarse grass on the low side of the road, without interrupting for a moment its slow and mournful march. My driver and I uncovered our heads; we saluted the priest, and exchanged some looks with the corpse-bearers; the unhappy creatures seemed very much fatigued, for one could easily perceive the frequent heavings of their chests. One of the women who followed the bier was very old and pale; her features, channelled with lines of care and sorrow, wore a severe and solemn expression. She walked in silence, now and then putting her shrivelled hand to her bloodless lips. Her companion, who was about five-and-twenty years of age, had red, moist eyes; her face was swollen and disfigured with weeping. In passing by us she was silent, and covered her face with her hands; but when the funeral had, about ten paces in advance of us, resumed the middle of the road, she recommenced her monotonous dirge in a tone of such

repressed anguish, as to move me very deeply. My driver followed with his eyes the retiring procession, then turned to me and said, "'Tis the carpenter Martyn they are burying, Martyn of Reaba."

"What do you know about them?"

"The women you mean? the old one is his mother; the young one is his wife."

"What disease did he die of?"

"A fever. The day before yesterday the steward sent for a doctor, but he was not at home. Martyn was a good carpenter; he was not a very industrious man . . . but he was a good workman. You see, his wife is left quite destitute . . . Ah! she is a wife . . . her tears are not bought. Women's tears are only water . . . but for all that" . . . .

And bending, he passed under the head of the thill horse, and seized in both hands the bow which rose above the collar. At first he leaned with his knee against the shoulder of the beast, shook twice or thrice the heavy bow, readjusted the harness upon his back, passed again under the bridle, played with his thumb upon the animal's nostrils, and at last went to the tottering wheel. He there stopped, looked at it, and, without ceasing to look at it attentively, drew, with philosophic gravity from beneath his cafetan, a penny snuff-box made of birch bark, and plunging two huge fingers into it slowly and with seeming effort, put himself to some trouble mixing up the snuff which it contained; then, compressing one side of his nose, he took three or four pinches with a loud snivelling noise, which had the effect of distorting his features and filling his eyes with water. Seeing that he had thus dissipated the thick vapours that lurked in his brain, but impatient at the slowness of his deliberations, I put a question to him,

on hearing which, he put his *tavlinnka** carefully into his pocket, by a shake of his head settled his hat over his eyes, and deliberately climbed up to the driving box.

"What are you going to do?" asked I, in surprise.

"Please get up," he rejoined, lifting his reins with the greatest coolness.

"And how shall we get along?"

"We shall get along."

"And the axle-tree?" . . .

"Be good enough to take your seat."

"But the axle-tree is broken."

"Broken, yes, broken; but we can manage to go slowly along to the farms (Vycelki). There, behind the wood, at the right, are the huts which they call the Ioudin Farms."

"Do you think we can crawl that length?" My driver did not deign a reply.

"Well, I will go on foot."

"As you like," said the boor.

He cracked his whip; the horses set themselves in motion. We reached Vycelki, although the little left wheel held on with difficulty, and turned awkwardly when it touched the ground. In descending the hill it was almost off, but the driver, by great exertion, kept it on, and we had no more trouble with it.

The so-called farms consisted of six miserable huts, which were, however, far from being old. Some were leaning to the right, some to the left, and others falling forward. The yard was surrounded with a hedge of interlaced branches. On arriving at the huts we perceived not a single living being; there was not

* The Russian peasant's *tavlinnka*, or snuff-box, is light, deep, and made of birch bark. The lid is a kind of stopper, with a bit of leather in the middle for raising it.

even a hen anywhere; no dogs. The ghost of a black dog, it is true, with a cocked tail, came out of an old stone trough that had no water in it; and, without barking, passed us, and retreated under a gate. I stepped upon the threshold, pushed open the door of a hut, and called out, but no one replied. I called out again: a painful mew was heard behind a second door; I pushed it with my foot, and a lean cat, half dead with hunger, passed close by me, her green eyes gleaming brightly in the shade. I put my head into the room and looked around; everything was sombre and smoky, not a creature was within. I walked ten paces into the yard, there was nobody there. In an inclosure, surrounded by a clay wall, lay a calf on its side lowing pitifully; a grey goose waddled along with great difficulty, its foot dislocated. I went into another yard which I found still more sombre and solitary. At last, in a court, and at the side, which under the summer's sun must have been as hot as an oven, I found a human being lying with his face to the ground, and his body covered with his armiak: it appeared to be a young boy. At some paces from him, under a thatched shed, and close by a broken cart, stood a miserable scraggy horse, with a harness of shreds and patches. The sunlight falling in brilliant rays through the narrow openings in the old wall, threw bright spots of light upon the russet shaggy coat of the miserable hack. In the same place, in a little cote erected on a high perch above the roof, some starlings kept chattering and looking curiously into the yard from their airy pavilion. I went up to awaken the sleeper . .

He raised his head, saw me, and rose actively.

"What? . . what do you want? what is it? . . ." murmured he, shaking himself out of his sleep.

I did not reply to him; I was struck with the appearance of the individual. Figure to yourself a dwarf of fifty years of age, with a very little face, brown and wrinkled, a pointed nose, and eyes hardly perceptible, and all these rough features surmounted by a monstrous mop of thick black hair, which looked upon his head like an enormous mushroom sticking on a tree stump. His body was extremely small, and it would be impossible to express the feeling which the sight of this strange being produced.

"What do you want?" asked he again.

I explained what I wanted. He listened to me without turning away his winking eyes for an instant.

"Well, can we have a new axle-tree? I will pay for it with pleasure."

"Who are you? sportsmen?" said he, examining me from head to foot.

"Yes."

"You do not fear shooting the birds of heaven! or striking down the beasts of the wood! Don't you think it a sin to shed the blood of the innocent, the blood of the birds of heaven?"

The strange old man spoke very distinctly; the sound of his voice confounded me. One could perceive no hesitation, no rusticity in it; the tone of it was melodious, young, sweet, and flexible as that of a woman.

"I have no axle-trees," he then added; "that one in my cart, you see, would not do for a telega, it would be too small for it."

"But can't I procure one in the village?"

"What village do you mean? There's no village here, there's nothing, there's nobody here; everybody is at work. Go away." And he lay down again on the hot baked earth.

I was determined not to be satisfied with this information.

"Listen, my good fellow," said I, putting my hand on his shoulder, "I ask a service from you, I need your help."

"God help you, for my part I am very much fatigued; I have been to town," said he, but not in an ill-humoured tone, as he pulled his armiak over his head.

"I ask a favour of you," repeated I; "I will pay you, and well too . . ."

"I don't need your money."

"Do be so kind, I beg you, my good fellow."

He sat up, crossed his little deformed legs, and said—

"Well, I can lead you to where they are cutting; it is a part of the forest that the merchants have bought . . God judge them! they have bought the green trees; they are carrying them off by little and little . . they intend to destroy it . . . God will judge them. You can get an axle-tree there, or they'll sell you one ready made."

"Capital, capital, let us go," I cried.

"A good axle of heart of oak," added he, but without moving from his seat.

"Is it far to the place?"

"Three versts."

"Well, we can go in your cart."

"I don't know that."

"Come, come, my good fellow, my driver is waiting for us in the road."

The dwarf rose with a sufficiently bad grace, and went with me. My man was quite enraged. He wished to water his horses, but the well was almost dry, and what water there was, was detestable. Water, coachmen say, is the first thing in the world. On seeing the little old man, he opened his eyes wide, shook his head, and cried out—

"Ah! Kacianouchko! good day!"

"Good day, Ierofee, good day, honest fellow," replied the dwarf Kacian in a querulous tone.

I eagerly communicated to the honest fellow the proposition of the dwarf. Ierofee approved of it, and brought our britchka into the yard. Whilst he unyoked the horses with deliberate haste, the dwarf stood leaning his shoulder against the gate, and regarding both of us with a morose air. He had the appearance of a man who had been taken at unawares, and, as far as one could read in his microscopic eyes, our sudden entrance into his yard had not raised us in his opinion.

"How! you too! have you been transplanted into this confounded hole?" said Ierofee, placing the bow of his thill horse against the little shed.

"As you see."

"Ah," muttered my driver, "And you know... the carpenter Martyn? ... Do you know Martyn the carpenter of Reaboff?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is dead; we have just now met his funeral."

Kacian shuddered.

"Dead!" muttered he, and his head fell.

"Yes, he is dead. Why did you not cure him, eh? You can cure people; you know something about doctoring, don't you?"

My man was evidently bantering him; he was amusing himself a little at the expense of the poor dwarf.

"Is that your chariot, eh?" asked Ierofee, jerking his elbow in the direction of the snug little cart.

"Yes."

"It is a telega, is it?" said Ierofee, seizing it by the shaft with such violence as to turn it upside down.

"A telega! And are you going to where they are cutting in a thing like that? No horse of ours could get between these shafts; our horses are too big—what sort of animal do you call that?"

"I don't know indeed," said Kacian, "what horse you are going to take; you must not take that little beast there, he has been to town," added he, sighing.

"You call that a horse!" cried Ierofee, and going up to the poor brute, he slapped it contemptuously on the neck. "Look you, he sleeps like a tun!"

I entreated Ierofee to yoke the poor animal. I wished to go with Kacian to the clearing. In these places one often falls in with quails. When the beast was yoked, I got up, and arranged myself in the best manner I was able at the bottom of the cart, which was shaped somewhat in the fashion of a boat; my dog was placed at my feet by Ierofee, who immediately approached and whispered in my ear—

"You have done well in getting that man to accompany you. He is an *iourodivetz;** they have given him the nickname of the Flea. I do not know how you were able to induce him . . ."

I wished to tell Ierofee that Kacian seemed to me not wanting in common sense; but my coachman continued to speak to me in a whisper.

"Take care where he takes you; once there, choose yourself an axle . . . yourself mind, and let it be a good solid one!"

He added aloud,

"Tell me, Flea, can one get any bread here? . . ."

"Seek well, perhaps you will find some," said Kacian, seizing hold of the shafts and seating himself on a little piece of wood fixed to the corner of the cart.

* A holy man, a kind of monk.

"What?" said Ierofee.

"Seek! I tell you," replied the dwarf, pulling the reins. And away we drove.

His little horse, to my great surprise, trotted merrily along. During the whole drive Kacian maintained an obstinate silence, and replied to all my questions in monosyllables, and in a very cross tone. We quickly arrived at the cutting; we climbed up to the counting-house, a high isolated hut, knocked up with the hatchet by the merchants, above a ravine, in the bottom of which ran a little brook, its waters dammed up so as to form a little pond. I found in the counting-house two young clerks, with dazzling white teeth, rather sweet eyes, wheedling tongues, and a hypocritical and false smile. I settled with them about my axle-tree, and then bent my steps to the clearing. I thought that Kacian would have remained near his horse and attended to it; but he sidled up to me, and said in a sad tone—

"Are you going to shoot birds?"

"Yes, if I find any."

"I will accompany you, if you like."

"Why not? Come along."

We set out, the cutting was almost twelve hundred yards in length. I confess that I paid more attention to Kacian than to my dog. It was in the wood that I comprehended first why they had nicknamed him the Flea. He went, as he always did, bareheaded—in fact the enormous mass of thick black hair on his head was quite sufficient without any other covering; one could see his head bobbing up and down, passing and repassing, appearing and disappearing, like an insect flitting amongst trusses of hay spread upon the floor of a hay loft. He walked with extraordinary agility; his arms and legs helping him at times to bound along, climb up, and

descend places; he kept his head constantly looking to the ground, now and then picking up simples which he thrust into his bosom, muttering to himself words probably understood by none but himself; then for some moments he would look at me and my dog in turn with a scrutinising glance of the strangest kind.

A fact well known to sportsmen is, that in the wood, in the low copses, and amongst the thick bushes in the glades, there sport innumerable numbers of grey ash-coloured birds, which dart in rapid jerks from one tree to another, chirping and bounding up and down in the air in their flight. Kacian decoyed them by mimicking their cries; a little quail took to flight raising a mournful cry; when above him, he improvised a strange accompaniment to it; a lark flying above him, stunned at the sight of his monstrous periwig, alighted; and he immediately took up its song. With me, however, Kacian exchanged not a word.

It was glorious weather, much finer than before; but the heat was overpowering. Even in the highest regions of the air one could see only a few light yellowish clouds. Their rough, woolly edges changed their form every instant; they seemed to mingle all together, but without casting any shadow. We wandered a long time, Kacian and I, in a place where the large trees had been cut down. Young shoots not yet three feet high surrounded each giant stump, which nourished them with its sap; and these delicate, smooth, and straight sprigs, covered with a rich coating of lively green the thick mass of fallen leaves below. The large, wide, circular excrescences, of which tinder is made, appeared between the stumps on the places where the axe had been employed; near them the wood-strawberry stretched out his small tendrils beside some thick groups of mushrooms.

My feet were entangled in the shrubs every moment, and I made my way with difficulty through the tall plants which rose in the scorching light of the sun. Everywhere the eyes were dazzled with the brilliant metallic lustre of the russet leaves of the shrubs, or delighted with the blue tendrils of the crane pea, the golden stripes of the glaucoma and the celandine, and the dark-coloured petals of the humble pansy. In some out-of-the-way corners, where wheelmarks were visible on the strips of delicate grass, rose, close to the track, regular heaps of wood chips, already quite black by exposure to the sun, cold, and rain; the shadow which fell from these regularly shaped walls was of a lozenge form; and this was the only shadow to be found in this place. A light breeze rose and fell; when the air began suddenly to stir, everything became lively, the leaves rustled, and the branches swayed and crossed their wide arms together under the influence of this kindly breath; the fern waved gracefully its wide leaves; man, bird, quadruped, and insect rejoiced . . . if the breeze died away, everything relapsed into silence and stillness. The crickets chirped with a persevering energy; their sharp, dry, uninterrupted noise is very unpleasant; it is the invariable accompaniment of the mid-day heat; to the irritated fancy it appears to proceed from the burning soil, at the call of the sun's powerful rays.

We met in our way a string of waggons,* and arrived at new cuttings. There, some aspens that had been newly cut lay sadly on the ground, having crushed with their enormous weight the grass and shrubs and

* In Russia there is often only one driver to three or four teams, and the result is that the roads sometimes get completely choked up. In Petersburg and Moscow, however, a law was enacted in 1851, that all strings of waggons should be divided into sections of, at most, three each.

underwood; some had their foliage still quite green, and their leaves shook slowly on the motionless branches; upon others the leaves were already shrivelled and withered; at the stump of one of those Titans of the forest lay heaps of fresh, moist chips, of a pale orange colour, from which exhaled wholesome and delicious odours. Farther off, there came from the thicket the dull measured strokes of the hatchet, and, from time to time, an umbrageous giant which had for several centuries mocked the attacks of time and the ravages of thousands of insects, bent itself solemnly and slowly to the ground, its old nurse, as if to embrace it in death—sinking under the strokes of a hatchet, which had probably received its handle from the very tree that was now falling.

I had seen no game for a long time; at last, from a large clump of dwarf oaks, their trunks overgrown with wormwood, a broom-rail darted forth. I fired, he turned in the air and fell. Kacian, on hearing the report, covered his eyes with his right hand, and never moved till I had reloaded my gun and picked up the game. Before I had gone twenty paces from him, he went to the place where the bird had fallen, stooped down towards the grass stained with several drops of blood, shook his head, and regarded me with a look of terror . . . Then I heard him mutter—"A sin! . . . Yes, it is certainly a sin."

The overpowering heat forced us at last to enter the wood; I threw myself under a high clump of hazels, above which a beautiful young maple tree stretched its light branches; Kacian seated himself on the trunk of a fallen birch. I gazed involuntarily at him. The highest leaves of the trees which overshadowed us moved slightly, and their shadow, of a light green, flickered beautifully on the miserable dwarf in the black

armiak, and on his angular puckered-up face. He neither raised nor lowered his head, but looked straight before him. Tired with his silence and moroseness, I stretched myself on my back, and began to observe the play of the leaves, left to themselves in the absence of the wind; the gentle movement of their interlacing leaves allowed one to see clearly the deep blue vault of heaven above. It is a pleasant thing to lie on one's back thus upon a bed of moss, and look up into the sky. You may easily imagine that you see above you the abysses of the great ocean, undisturbed by the motion of a ship. It appears to you that the trees, instead of springing upwards from the earth, are themselves the roots of enormous marine plants which push out among these crystal waves; the leaves upon the trees sometimes show themselves clear as emeralds; sometimes they become opaque, and put on a colour of green and gold; in another place, far, far away, at the end of a slender branch, you see one tiny, isolated leaf, immovable in an azure corner of the sky, and by its side another which flutters up and down—its movements resembling the play of a fish's tail, as if this play was the effect, not of the air, but of the joy and volition of a living being. Like the floating islands of fairy-land, the white clouds, in all their diversity of form, float serenely, pass in succession before you .... and look!—suddenly this sea, this shining sky, these branches and glowing leaves, are at once set in motion, and resound with an ever renewed and ever dying noise; and if you listen, there arises a fresh, lively whispering, like the continued beating of the waves of an advancing tide upon a sandy beach. You remain motionless; the sight is too sweet, too refreshing to the soul, to allow one to tear one's self from it so soon.

The deep pure azure which you contemplate brings upon your lips a smile of serenity. You view with pleasure the brilliant clouds, too, which hang in the atmosphere, and with them, as it were, you see passing before you a long train of your dearest memories of happiness; and it seems that your gaze stretches ever farther and farther, and draws you after it into those tranquil and clear abysses where one is always happy, and where you would wish to dwell . . .

"Bârin! hallo! bârin," said Kacian, all at once, in a sonorous voice.

I rose with surprise. This man, who up to this moment had scarcely answered my questions, now spoke, now accosted me.

"What?" said I.

"Why did you shoot a bird?" said he, looking at me fixedly.

"How—why? The broom-rail is game; we eat it."

"It was not for food you shot it, bârin; you will not eat it; you killed it for pleasure."

"You are surely not afraid to eat a hen or a duck, are you?"

"The hen and duck are destined for the nourishment of man; the rail is a free bird of the wood. And it is not the only living thing that has been made free. Every denizen of the forests, of the fields, of the rivers, of the marshes, of the meadows, of the plain and of the mountain, of land and water, ought to have confidence in the kindness of man. It is a sin to kill them; let them live out their natural term. Man has plenty to live on, without them—to satisfy his hunger and thirst. He has wheat, the first gift of God, and water from heaven, and the animals who give themselves to him, as we know from our fathers and patriarchs."

I looked at this singular little man with redoubled

curiosity; he seemed at this moment to have no lack of words. He spoke with a certain animation, and a gentle gravity, winking his eyes from time to time.

"In your opinion, then, it would also be a sin to kill a fish?"

"The blood of a fish is cold," replied he, in the positive tone of conviction; "a fish is dumb; it is a stranger to fear and joy; it has no voice; it has little or no sensibility; blood is sluggish in him . . . . Blood," pursued he, "is a holy and sacred thing. The sun, the eye of God, does not look upon blood; blood is covered from his sight; it is a great sin to expose blood to the sunlight; it is fearful . . . Oh! it is a very great sin."

He sighed, and was silent. I regarded the strange old fellow with profound astonishment. His language differed entirely from that which I had been accustomed to hear from the peasants whom I had known in the course of my life. Our merchants and traders, fluent speakers as they are, could not talk thus. It was a solemn mode of speech; it struck me as very remarkable in the midst of this Russian solitude.

"Tell me, pray, Kacian," said I, looking full at his face, which beamed with emotion, "what do you deal in?"

His look fell slightly at the question, and he took some time to reply.

"I live," said he at last, "as God ordains; and as to what I deal in . . . no, I don't deal in anything. I am very silly, and have been so since childhood. I work if I can. You see I don't look like a woodcutter; I am neither tall nor healthy enough; my arms are weak. Well! in spring I snare nightingales."

"You snare nightingales? How does that tally with

what you said just now, that nobody should injure any inhabitant of the woods, the meadows, or the mountains?"

"'Tis killing them—that's the fault. Death takes what comes to him. Look at the carpenter Martyn. He lived, poor fellow, but a short time; now he is dead. His wife will die too of grief and anxiety about her little ones. Neither man nor beast can cheat death. Death always advances; one cannot escape from him; but we need not assist him—we need not engage in his odious service . . . I snare nightingales, but God keep me from killing one. I do not catch them to kill them; I am not an executioner. I catch them to give pleasure to people by their singing—for those who love birds."

"You go to catch them at Koursk, I suppose?"

"I go to Koursk, and sometimes farther, if I need. I pass the night in the marshes, at the edge of the coppices, always alone, or in the open country—but in some sheltered place. There the woodcocks whistle, the hares cry, and far off the wild ducks quack . . . I watch in the evening, I listen in the morning, before dawn I spread my lime twigs. A nightingale sings plaintively; its note is very sweet, but sad . . ."

"You sell the little captives?"

"I give them away, bârin, I give them to good people?"

"And what is it you do then?"

"How, what do I do?"

"How do you employ yourself?"

"Eh! I don't work at anything; I am a very bad worker. As I can read . . ."

"What! can you read?"

"Yes, I can read a little. God assisted me in that; a few excellent people helped me likewise."

"Have you a family?"

"No."

"How? Are your relations all dead?"

"No . . . I do not know; God has never so ordered it that I should have a family. I have faith in God; we are all at His disposal; He guides us when we could not guide ourselves. A man need only be just, that's all; and when he is just, he is a man of God, a child of God."

"You have probably some relation, however?"

"Yes . . . yes . . . no."

"Tell me, pray . . . you remember the coachman asking why you had not cured the carpenter Martyn . . . Do you know remedies for preserving life in dangerous diseases?"

"Your coachman is a just man," said Kacian in a reverie; "he is a good man, but he has his faults. He calls me the little doctor . . . Whom can I cure? . . . and who has the power to cure? It is God's part to take away and to spare. But there are—yes, there are herbs and flowers which relieve pain. The water-cress is a salutary plant for man; the plantain is also good. Both may be recommended; they are the simples of the good God. There are others which are useful also, but it is a sin even to speak of them. If you go out in a prayerful mood . . . 'Tis true, you must say certain words then" . . . And, lowering his voice, he added, "Health is given to those who have faith; not to others."

"You did not give anything, then, to Martyn?"

"I only knew of his illness when it was too late; but what happens to us is decreed. Martyn could not have lasted longer than he did. To those who have not to live long, the sun refuses his light, and bread even gives no nourishment; they are called elsewhere. God have mercy on the soul of the excellent man!"

"Have you been long settled in this country?"

"No, only four years," said Kacian, a little agitated. "When our late master was alive, we lived without any thought of the morrow, but now the guardians of the estate have expatriated us. Our late master was a good soul, a good natured and pious man . . . God receive him into Paradise! The guardians of the estate examined, deliberated on, and arranged everything; they had their reasons certainly."

"Where did you live before?"

"We lived on the Metcha—the beautiful Metcha."

"Is it far from here?"

"A hundred versts."

"Is it a finer country down there?"

"Oh! much finer. There, you have open plains and large rivers. Here it is close and dry . . . Here we are orphans. Down there at Metcha, you climb a hill, and, heavens! what a beautiful prospect is spread before you! River, prairie, forests; here a church, there again vast meadows. You can see far, far . . . very far. There, besides, the land is better; it is clayey, it is of good friable clay, say the peasants . . . But there is always enough of wheat for me everywhere."

"Confess, however, brother, that you would rather be in your own country."

"Perhaps; but, indeed, it is well enough any where. I have no family, and don't care about staying at home. What matters it when I am so little at home? When you go, you go," added he, raising his voice; "one feels lighter; the sun warms you better; we are nearer the eye of God, and the heart sings then most cheerily. I see plants growing around me, I examine them, I come back and pluck them; they are intended for me. The water, the beautiful water—you taste it, you mark the place where the spring is. The birds warble, ah! . . . But at Koursk above all . . . The steppes, what steppes!

—places made for man's admiration, for his delight! See the widely extended plain, mark the goodness of God! The steppes extend, as the people say, to the warm seas, where the gamaïoun warbles his delicious notes; there the trees and shrubs have ever a fresh greenness, and you gather golden apples from trees of silver, and the people live in abundance without wronging one another . . . I shall finish my wanderings by going there . . . And have I been in few places? I have seen Romena, I have seen Simbirsk, a beautiful city; I have seen Moscow, with her golden cupolas; I have visited the Oka, the benefactress of the people; Tsna, the beautiful dove, and mother Volga; and how many men have I seen, how many good and pious peasants, and how many beautiful towns have I gone through; and I shall go also down there . . . and then . . . and then . . . And I am not the only man; many peasants shod with laptis, wander in the world, seeking for truth . . . yes . . . And what does one gain by remaining always in one place? Oh! there is no justice among men . . ."

Kacian pronounced these last words with much volubility, but with the greatest distinctness. He said many other things which have completely escaped my memory; but that which struck me above all, was the strange expression which his features assumed. There was something in them so little conformable to what one sees every day in the country, that the word Iourodivetz sprang several times to my lips. After he had rested some moments, and coughed slightly, more agreeable ideas seemed to return gently to him, and he said:—

"What a beautiful sun! . . . My lord, what a blessing is the light of the sun! and how agreeably warm it is in the wood!"

After a minute of silent ecstasy, he became extremely absent; he did not look at me, he struck up a song; but not raising his voice so as to be heard, the words were scarcely audible.*

"Well, he is putting it together," said I to myself. Meeting my eye, he shuddered and stopped; and then looked with a steady gaze into the wood. I turned my head, and saw a little village girl about eight years old, in a blue sarafan, a square neckerchief on her head, and a wicker basket in her hand. It was very evident that she had not expected our meeting; she stood motionless in the shade of a green clump of hazels, upon a spot of ground covered with short grass; she looked at me timidly with her little black eyes. I had scarcely perceived that she had disappeared entirely behind a tree, when, "Anna, Anna, come here, fear nothing," cried Kacian, in a soothing voice.

"I am afraid," cried the child.

"Don't fear; come here, I tell you."

Anna without replying, left her fortress, and made a detour so as to arrive only at the dwarf; her little feet left scarcely a trace of her passage among the high grass, and she met the old man at the edge of the hazel copse. She was probably thirteen or fourteen years old, and not eight as I fancied at first. She was little and spare, and her pretty little face strikingly resembled Kacian's, though his face was by no means handsome. There were the same angular features, the same strange look, mischievous and presumptuous, absent and penetrating, which his face wore; the same

* His song, so far as I was able to catch the words of it, seemed to relate to himself, his wandering mode of life, his adventures, the places he had seen, and the herbs and birds whose natures he had studied.

motions also . . . Kacian eyed her from head to foot; she stood close by him on the right.

"Have you gathered the mushrooms?" said he.

"Yes," she replied with a timid smile.

"Have you found many?"

"A great number," said she, looking at him and smiling again.

"Did you find any white ones?"

"Yes, some."

"Let us see them."

She took the basket off her arm, and half lifted the burdock leaf which covered them.

"Eh!" said Kacian, bending over the basket, "what beautiful mushrooms! They are good, very good, Annouchka."

"She is your daughter, is she not, Kacian?" I asked. Anna blushed a little.

"No; but . . . she is my relation," replied Kacian, with pretended indifference. "Well, Annouchka, go now, go away, and take care...."

"Why should she return on foot?" I hastened to say; "we can take her along with us."...

Annouchka reddened like the field poppy; she seized the twisted cord which served for a handle to her basket, and looked earnestly at the old man.

"Not a step, she is a good walker; she will easily get home," replied he in the same careless and indifferent tone. "She doesn't need a carriage. Go, Annouchka, go."

Anna disappeared in the gloom of the wood. Kacian followed her with his eye; then, lost in thought, his head fell, and he smiled a long time. In that smile, as in the conversation which he had held just now with the girl—in the tone of voice even, which he had whilst talking with her, you perceived ineffable tenderness; it

was a tone of passion—of love. He still kept his eye on the places she had passed, smiled again, and wiping his face, shook his head several times.

"Why have you sent her away so quickly?" said I, "I would like to have bought what she had gathered."

"Oh, indeed! you can buy all that as well at home, if you have a mind," replied he, using for the first time the word "you."

You have a pretty little companion there in your solitude.

"Hum . . . bah!" . . . replied he, with a very sulky air; and from this moment relapsed into his former moodiness.

I made many attempts to restore him to good humour, but, seeing I lost my trouble, I took up my gun, whistled on my dog, and bent my steps to the counting house. The intense heat had sensibly diminished, but I was still as unsuccessful as ever; I regained Vycelki with a very good axle, but with only one solitary broom-rail in my game bag. When the little car which conveyed us re-entered Kacian's yard, he turned about.

"Bârin! ho! bârin," said he to me, "I have done you wrong, I am the cause of your shooting nothing to-day, and of your not finding anything."

"Is it possible?"

"That is my secret. Your dog is a very good one, and well broken; but he could do nothing for you. You say to yourself, 'Ah.! the men—the woodcutters, have frightened away the game!' And I, when I saw the dog, 'Here is a beautiful animal,' but what use has it been to you?"

It would have been to no purpose trying to convince Kacian of the impossibility of frightening away the game by employing cabalistic words while plucking

such and such herbs. I said no more, and we got out of the car. Anna was not in the cottage; she had just arrived before us, and had put her basket of mushrooms on the dresser. Ierofee adjusted the new axle, after subjecting it to a severe and unjust depreciation. It was about an hour before we were ready to start, leaving with Kacian a little money, which he at first refused to accept; I insisted; he reflected a few moments, took the money in his hand, and afterwards put it in his breast. During the hour I waited, I did not hear him speak ten words; he stood with his back to the gate, without paying the slightest attention to the murmurs and reproaches of my coachman, and bade me adieu with the greatest coldness.

I was scarcely out of the yard, when I remarked that Ierofee was in a dreadfully bad humour. To speak the truth, the poor fellow could find nothing in the village to satisfy the cravings of hunger; he could not even find water for his horses. The vexation of the man could be perceived even without looking at his face. Seated on his box, he half turned towards me, seemingly with a desire to speak, but, in reply to my first question, he contented himself with launching some edifying speeches at the horses. Then gradually coming to the order of ideas which had first taken possession of his mind: "A village!..." muttered he, "is that a village?... You ask for kvass, they have none Ah! heavens, see that lodge! And their water, it's only fit for spitting out again, foh!" and he spat vigorously... "No cucumbers, nor kvass, nothing... nothing! Hallo! you," added he, roughly addressing the off-horse, "I know you, you pickpocket, get along. You are making believe as if you were drawing, eh!... I'll make you ... I will..." and these words were accented by a cut with the whip... "He has all at once turned to cheat-

ing, instead of what he was before; what a good beast that once was . . . La! la! la! . . . take care there . . . I . . ."

"Tell me," said I at last, "what sort of a man is this Kacian?"

Ierofee made no reply at first; he was in general a man of a grave and reflective turn of mind, but I could easily observe that my question calmed and gladdened him.

"The Flea?" said he, jerking the reins . . . "he is a curious man, an Iourodivetz. There are few, very few men, who are like him. For example, look you, if there is no sin in making the comparison, I would compare him, perhaps, to our roan; he has, like him, found means to dispense altogether with work. All very well for the Flea; what sort of workman would he make? His soul and body scarcely hold together . . . God knows . . . he has been so since childhood. At first he went to be a carrier with his uncles, and he had three of them. That bored him, and he gave the business the slip. He wished to live at home, but he has never been able to have a home. He can't rest in one place; a true flea, I tell you. He had, thank heaven, a very good lord, who gave him all his own way. Since that time he wanders about freer than the rock goat, and nobody cares where he goes. God alone knows what is in him; sometimes he is as mute as a fish, sometimes he talks, talks on, and his conversation is all to himself. Is it merely affectation? no, it is not affectation; he is a man . . . quite . . . a man without his match. He sings well, however, oh yes! as things go . . . yes, very well."

"And does he give physic?"

"Physic! eh! what! . . . he is a man who can do that. It is true that he cured me of scrofula. A physician! an odd sort of physician! a weakling who has no bread, no kvass," added he in a low voice.

"Have you known him long?"

"Yes, we were neighbours at Sytchofka, in the village of Metcha."

"Do you know anything of a little Annouchka that he called to him in the wood?...Is she related to him?"

Ierofee looked at me over his shoulder, and smiled—not a smile of the lips only, but of the whole face.

"Eh!... Yes, a relation, a relation. She is an orphan; she has no mother, and never even knew who she was. However, she ought to be something to Kacian, since she resembles him so closely. She lives with him. She is a fine girl, and there is nothing to say against her; a good, good girl. And would you believe it? he has actually begun to teach her her letters, and he will succeed too, for he is an intelligent, clever fellow... a man who ... can do more than that, I fancy... Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried he, stopping all at once, bending to the right and left, and smelling about. "There is a smell of something burning, I declare. Yes, I'm right... Ah! these new axles!... what was the good of greasing them? I will fetch some water. Here is a pond at hand."

He alighted slowly, and went about, smelling and looking at every part of the britschka; he then went to the pond, brought the water and lashed it about the axle, taking all the time great pleasure in listening to the noise made under the stock of the wheel.

Six times, in the course of ten versts, he had, in a similar way, to throw water on the burning axle, so that night had already fallen before we reached home. It was poor sport I had that day.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOURMISTER. — SERFS AND STEWARDS IN RUSSIA.

About twenty versts from my estate resides a retired officer of the Guards, a handsome young gentleman of my acquaintance; his name is Arcadi Pavlytch Péen-otchkin. His estate, amongst other advantages which it has over mine, is well stocked with game. His house has been built on the plan of a French architect; his servants are all, without exception, in English liveries; he gives excellent dinners. He receives his guests in the most amiable manner . . . but for all this, people do not care much about going to his house. He is a wonderfully discreet man, very positive; he has received an excellent education, has been in the service, his manners have been polished by contact with the highest classes in the empire, and he at present occupies himself with the management of his estate with signal success. Arcadi Pavlytch is, according to his own account, severe, but just; he watches over the wellbeing of his vassals, and if he chastises them, it is the best proof that he loves them. "You must treat them like children," he says on such occasions, "for they are really nothing but grown children, my dear sir, and one must take that into consideration." When he finds himself under what he calls the sad necessity

of having recourse to rigorous measures, he does not show the least sign of anger, and does not even raise his voice; he merely puts out his forefinger, and says quite coldly to the culprit: "I requested you, my friend," . . . or, "What is the matter with you, my friend? recall your scattered senses" . . . He quietly bites his lips, his mouth contracts imperceptibly, and that is all.

He is a little under the middle height, with a good figure—in short, altogether a handsome fellow. He takes the greatest care of his hands and nails; his cheeks and lips glisten with health. He has a frank open-hearted smile; and his politeness is accompanied with a gentle winking of the eyes, which is not unbecoming in him. He shews infinite taste in his dress; he is continually ordering large numbers of books—French publications of all kinds—though he is himself no great reader, and at most has turned over the leaves of the *Wandering Jew*. He is an excellent partner at cards. In short, Arcadi Pavlytch passes for a most accomplished gentleman, and with mothers who have marriageable daughters, for one of the most desirable matches in the whole province. The ladies are very fond of him, and praise his manners as quite perfect. He is gifted with an admirable reserve, with the prudence of the serpent, and his name has never been mixed up in any scandal. On occasion, he likes very well to checkmate and utterly overwhelm some timid opponent. It is then he shews himself; but after having caused his power to be felt, he does not mercilessly pursue his advantage. He has a contempt for low society, taking care never to compromise himself, though, in a moment of gaiety, he will go so far as to own himself a follower of Epicurus, in spite of his supreme contempt for philosophy in general, which he calls windy nourishment for German minds, or the quintessence of Teutonic stupidity.

He is fond of music. When at cards, he will sing with some appearance of feeling, though only from between his teeth. He has in his memory some passages of *Lucia* or *La Sonnambula;* but he almost always begins on too high a note. He passes his winters at St. Petersburg. His house is admirably managed; even the coachmen have not been beyond his influence, and they not only clean the harness of their horses and brush their armiaks, but carry their refinement so far as to wash their faces every day, not forgetting behind their ears and the back of their necks. It is true, the servants of Arcadi Pavlytch have a slightly downcast look; but in our good country of Russia it is not easy to distinguish sullenness from sleepiness.

Arcadi Pavlytch has a soft and unctuous way of speaking; he pauses frequently, and delights to roll every word in his mouth before sending it out through his fine bushy moustaches. He takes every opportunity of seasoning his conversation with French phrases, such as "*Mais c'est impayable! Mais comment donc! Voila qui'est merveilleux! enchanté, charmé, ravi.....*" and others. In spite of all these charming traits of character, I do not, for myself at least, feel strongly attracted to him; and if it were not his woodcocks, his heathcocks, and his partridges, I am afraid there is great probability of our forgetting each other. A vague restlessness seizes you the moment you enter his house; the very comfort that surrounds you is uncomfortable. In the evening, when a valet, curled and pomaded, comes in his blue livery, with buttons emblazoned with the family coat-of-arms, to pull off your boots in his quiet respectful way, you feel uneasy and constrained in the presence of this pale lean face and genteel air. You would feel much more at ease if your eyes met the large red raw cheek-bones, the

ugly flat nose of a strong young fellow, newly taken from the plough ..... even though, in his awkward but well-meant endeavours to pull off your boots, he should burst them, and almost sprain your leg at the haunch, at the same time cracking every seam in his new nankin cafetan.

Notwithstanding the little sympathy I felt for Arcadi Pavlytch, I happened once to pass a night at his house. Early next morning, I ordered the servant to put the horses to my calash; but Arcadi would not permit me to leave till I had breakfasted with him in the English fashion, and he conducted me to his study for that purpose. Besides tea, there were cutlets, eggs, butter, honey, Gruyere cheese, and some other things. Two valets, in white trousers, silently and with great activity anticipated our least wishes. We were seated on a divan of chintz. Arcadi Pavlytch had on a very wide silk charovar, a waistcoat of black velvet, an elegant fez with a blue tassel, and yellow slippers *a la Chinoise*, without quarter-pieces. He drank some tea, nibbled a bit of dry toast, smiled, looked at his nails, began to smoke, put a cushion under his elbow, and in general, showed that he was in an excellent humour. Soon after, he attacked the cutlets and cheese seriously, and after acquitting himself manfully in this respect, he poured out a glass of red wine, carried it to his lips . . . and frowned.

"How does it happen that the wine has not been heated?" he said in a dry voice to one of his valets. The man trembled, grew pale, and stood as if he were petrified. "I have asked you a question, my dear friend," resumed the young lord, with a studied calm, his large eyes turned full on the poor man, who twisted convulsively the napkin he had in his hand, and under the fascination of his master's serpent look was quite unable to articulate a syllable.

Arcadi Pavlytch dropped his head, and continued to look in a pensive way at the unfortunate culprit, but from beneath his eyebrows.

"Pardon me, my dear sir," he said, addressing me, with an amiable smile, and laying his hand in a confidential way on my knees; and he looked again in silence at the valet. "Go!" he said at last, raising his eyebrows. He touched the button of a little spring-bell, and a stout dark man with a low forehead and streaky eyes entered.

"See Fédor put to rights," said, but in still fewer words, Arcadi Pavlytch, with perfect self-possession.

The little thick man bowed, and left the room.

"One of the little inconveniences of the country, my dear sir," said Arcadi, smiling . . . "But where are you going? Stay, stay; do be so good as to sit down."

"No, I must go; I have no more time to spare."

"Going to shoot? Always shooting! It is a passion of yours! What part of the country are you going to?"

"Forty versts from this, to Reabovo."

"To Reabovo! Ah! then I shall go with you. Reabovo is only five versts from my estate at Chipilovka, and I have put off too long going there; I have never been able to find a moment's leisure till to-day. It is a capital plan. You will shoot till you are tired at Reabovo, and in the evening you will come to my house. Charming! We shall have a capital supper; I shall take my cook with me, and you will find a bed ready for you. Bravo! bravo!" added he, without waiting for my answer. "It is all settled—all arranged! Hallo! Somebody! quick, get ready my green calash. You have never been at Chipilovka yet? . . . Well, I ought to have some scruples about asking you to pass a night in my bourmister's* house; but I know you are a good-

* Bourmister is a variation of the German *Burgmeister*.

natured fellow, and, besides, when you are at Reabovo, you can't have anything better to sleep in than a hay-shed. Let us go, then."

He began to hum a French song. "Ah! perhaps you don't know," resumed he, balancing himself on one foot, and then on the other, "perhaps you don't know that at my place down there all the moujiks are tenants . . . Upon my word, I don't see how the constitution will set that to rights. I should have infinitely preferred making them work three days a-week, as yours do; but you see there is very little arable land on the estate . . . They are very punctual in paying their rents, it is true; I can't understand how they can make both ends meet . . . Well, that is their look-out. I have down there a capital bourmister, a strong-headed fellow, a regular *statesman*—on my soul! You'll see for yourself."

I saw no way of excusing myself. The result was, that, instead of leaving at nine o'clock, it was two in the afternoon before we got away. Every sportsman will understand my impatience. Arcadi Pavlytch liked to coddle himself, as he called it. He took with him such immense stores of linen, provisions, clothes, cushions, perfumes, and other *necessaries*, as would have been sufficient to fit out a German in the best style for a whole year. Whenever we were going down a hill, Arcadi Pavlytch spoke to the coachman in his brief, energetic way, and I could not help concluding that my travelling companion was a little of a coward. Our journey was accomplished in safety, except that, when crossing a small bridge that had been newly repaired, the cart which carried the cook and his utensils was overturned, and one of the wheels went over his stomach. Arcadi Pavlytch was terribly frightened at this accident to a man who had been born, brought up, and formed

under his own roof, and could not rest till he had sent to inquire whether his hands and arms were unhurt; and it was not till he had received an answer in the affirmative, that he completely recovered the calmness and serenity from which he never willingly parted. Our horses were good, and yet we went very slowly. I was in the calash with Arcadi Pavlytch, who made it a principle never to be in a hurry on any occasion; and at the end of the drive, I must avow that I was eaten up by ennui, although my friend had been doing his best for several hours to entertain me, inflicting confidences on me which I should most willingly have dispensed with, and parading himself as a friend of public liberty. At last we arrived, but not at Reabovo, as I had wished, but at Chipilovka. It was best, after all. It was too late to think seriously of having any shooting for this day, so I resigned myself to my fate with the best grace I could muster.

The cook had arrived a few minutes before us. I noticed he had already made some arrangements, and especially, had taken care to apprise his lord and master of his arrival. At the entrance to the village, we saw coming to us the *starosta*, the son of the bourmister or bailiff, a sturdy, ruddy-faced peasant, six feet high, on horseback, with his hat in his hand, and dressed in his best armiak, unbuttoned, and waving about him.

"And where is Sophron?" asked Arcadi Pavlytch.

The starosta alighted from his horse, bowed very low, and muttered:—

"Health, father, my Lord Arcadi Pavlytch." Then he raised his head, adjusted his hair with a shake, and answered that Sophron was at Peroff, but that he had despatched a messenger to bring him immediately.

"Very well! Get behind the calash, and follow us."

The starosta led his horse to the side of the road, about

ten paces from us, remounted, and trotted behind us, cap in hand. We made our entry into the village. We met several moujiks returning from the thrashing-mill, lying bent up in the bottom of their empty carts, their legs in the air at one end, and their nose at the other, singing away with great glee, although every limb in their body was constantly shaken by the jolting of the cart; but the sight of our calash and the starosta stopped their piping. They took off their winter caps (it is very sad to see the winter cap on the head during summer, although they then generally use it as a pillow), checked their horses, straightened themselves out, and sat stiff and upright on their seats, as if waiting for orders. Arcadi Pavlytch condescended to smile to them, and wave his hand. All the village was astir, as only a Russian village can be; the women, dressed in checked aprons, flung their caps at the dogs, who wished likewise to shew their devotion, although their efforts were very unsuccessful; a lame old man, with a beard reaching from his eyes to his breast, walked up to a horse at the water-trough beside the well, and administered to him, without any conceivable reason, a firm kick in the flank, going to rest himself against the gate after this exploit; the children, in long blouses, fled bawling to the cottages, flung themselves on the ground, and with head well down, and heels kicking in the air, squeezed themselves under the door, taking great care not to let themselves be seen. Even the chickens rushed at a furious rate under the carriage gates. A brave cock, with a breast of brilliant black, outshining the most brilliant of satin waistcoats, and a red tail proudly curved, occupied in a bold and dignified position, the middle of the road, as if to dispute the passage with us . . . but suddenly he took fright, and bolted like the most cowardly chicken of the village.

The bourmister's cottage stood a little apart from the others, in the middle of a field of strong green hemp. We stopped at the gate of the yard. M. Péenotchkin rose, gracefully divested himself of his cloak, and stepped out of the carriage with a benignant smile. The bourmister's wife came out to receive us, bowing very low. M. Péenotchkin yielded his hand to the repeated embraces of the good woman, and ascended the steps in front of the house. In a dark corner of the lobby stood the starosta's wife; she too bowed very low, but without daring to aspire to the high honour of kissing hands. In what is called the summer-room, were two women very busy; they were putting in order articles of every description—empty jugs, old toulups, butter-cans, and a cage in which sat a monkey on a heap of rags; afterwards proceeding to sweep together the rubbish with bunches of thin birch branches stripped of their leaves. The entrance of Arcadi Pavlytch put them to flight. He seated himself on the bench, just below the holy images which the "man of the people" never fails to salute when he enters a room. The coachmen now brought in the trunks, portmanteaus, and carpet-bags; and my reader will understand that they took infinite precautions not to make the slightest noise with their feet.

While this was going on, Arcadi Pavlytch questioned the starosta about the harvest, the amount of seed that had been sown, and other subjects of rural economy. The starosta took care to answer so as to satisfy his master; he spoke slowly and dully, and kept buttoning and unbuttoning his cafetan as if his fingers were frozen. He leaned against the door, doing his best to appear as little embarrassed as possible; although he had always to look behind him, and make way for the comings and goings of Monsieur the valet. In one

of these moments, when he stepped aside, I happened to see the bourmister's wife noiselessly pinching and beating a woman, who dared not cry out when his mightiness M. Péenotchkin was in the house. Suddenly we heard the rapid rumbling of wheels, and the bourmister jumped down from a telega and entered the room.

The statesman was a short thick man, broad-shouldered, his hair somewhat grey, with a red nose, small blue eyes, and a beard the shape of a fan upside down. Allow me to remark, in passing, that since Russia was a country, there never has been seen a single example of a man growing rich without, at the same time, enlarging the development of his beard. A poor devil has worn all his life a Jewish peaked beard; you look at it some day...it has increased, spread out, radiated in every direction; but this luxury in beards could not make its appearance till the time of his prosperity: so that in this way the change of exterior is an index of a change of fortune.

The bourmister had evidently seasoned his dinner at Peroff with not a few bumpers; his face was bathed in perspiration, and he smelt of wine ten paces off.

"Ah! you, our fathers, our benefactors!" * said the cunning sneak in an odd sort of sing-song, and with such an air of tender devotion, that I expected every moment to see him burst into tears; "you have at last condescended to come! Your hand, father, your hand," added he, sticking out his great coarse lips.

* The bourmister is speaking to his master alone. There are to be found in Russia a few men who carry the custom of *pluralising* dignitaries to an extreme; for example, they will say—"His Excellency the Commandant are come."—On the other hand, when employing the personal pronoun, *thou* is considered more respectful than *you*

Arcadi Pavlytch gave him his hand to kiss, and said in a caressing voice :—

"Well, brother Sophron, how do things go with you here?"

"Ah! our fathers!" answered Sophron, "and how could they by any possibility go ill? How *could* they? They go well when you, our benefactors, our fathers, deign to grant the light of your illustrious presence to our poor little village .. Oh! I shall feel happy till the day of my death .. thanks be to God, Arcadi Pavlytch, thanks be to God, everything is going well, well, very well; all goes well to your grace."

After a minute's silence consecrated to mute contemplation, the statesman, overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of his devotion, fetched a deep sigh, and, as if carried away by an irresistible impulse (in which a rather strong dose of brandy formed no inappreciable element), he begged again permission to kiss the baronial hand, and sang out with even more animation than before :—

"Ah! our fathers and benefactors! .. and .. I .. oh .. what .. God of heaven! joy takes away my senses .. I see, I see .. I cannot believe my eyes .. it is you, our fathers, our .."

The farce was well played. Arcadi Pavlytch turned to me, smiled one of his neat little smiles, and said in French—"*N'est-ce pas que c'est touchant?*"

"Ah! Arcadi Pavlytch," resumed the bourmister, "why have you come here? you make me very sorry .. you did not let me know that you were coming? .. How will you be able to pass the night? it is so dusty here, so dirty .."

"That is nothing, Sophron, nothing," answered Arcadi Pavlytch, smiling; "I feel very comfortable and very well here."

"Well! our dear fathers! well! yes; but for whom is

it well? for us poor peasants . . But for you! . . Ah! our fathers, ah! our benefactors, pardon a poor stupid peasant; yes, my head is turned upside down, quite upside down; I am crazy with so much happiness."

Supper was served; we sat down to table. The old fellow bundled his son out of the apartment; he smelt too strongly, he said himself, of the fields; the statesman took up his position, and stood like an automaton, a few paces from the table.

"Well! old fellow, have you settled that business with our neighbours, about the boundary line?" said M. Péenotchkin.

"Settled, my lord, settled, thanks to thee and to thy name. The day before yesterday we signed the agreement. The Khlynovskis made a great ado about it at first. They demanded this and that, and a little bit more, and God knows what. Dogs! poor devils! fools! But we, father, thanks to thy generosity, we have satisfied Nicolas Nicolaévitch. We acted according to thy instructions, bârin; we did everything that thou didst command; yes, we arranged and concluded the business according to the written order which Egor Dmitritch brought us from thy grace."

"Egor sent me his report," said Arcad Pavlytch majestically.

"Ah! yes, bârin! Egor Dmitritch knows how a thing should be done."

"Very well, you are satisfied, I suppose?"

Sophron needed but this to make him break out again into his—"Ah! our fathers, our saviours and benefactors, ah! you load us with generosity; preserve your favour always to us; for we pray God, day and night, for you, our fathers . . It is true, there is very little land here . . ."

"Well, well, Sophron, I know that you are a de-

voted servant. And...how do the crops look this year?"

"The crops?...Not at all satisfactory. But permit me, good fathers, Arcadi Pavlytch, to tell you of a little incident that has happened among us."

Here he approached M. Péenotchkin, leaned obliquely towards him, winked, and said:—

"A dead body was found on our land the other day."

"How is that?"

"Ah! our fathers, I ask the same question; it must have been the doing of some enemy. It was lucky, however, that it was lying near the boundary of our land, near a field that belonged to some other person. I immediately made our people carry away the corpse and leave it on our neighbour's land. I posted a sentinel not far off, and ordered him not to let himself be seen, and to preserve the strictest silence. Then I ran to the superintendent of police, and told him about it in my own way, and left him a small token of gratitude for his trouble. Well, bârin, I was in luck, the body lies at the door of our neighbour. Two hundred roubles are nothing in a case of this kind—nothing more than a penny loaf to a starving man."

M. Péenotchkin laughed at the exploit of the bourmister, now and then saying in French, and nodding his head in the direction of the overseer, "*Quel gaillard! hein!*"

By this time it was late. Arcadi Pavlytch ordered the table to be taken away, and some hay to be brought. The valet spread two beds, put sheets and pillows on them, and we lay down. Arcadi Pavlytch sent away Sophron, after giving him orders for next day; and, before going to sleep, treated me to an eulogium on the admirable qualities of the Russian peasant, add-

ing that, since Sophron had been his overseer, he had never wanted a penny of the rent of his estate.

A night-watch struck upon a plank suspended by two cords;* a little child, not yet acquainted, like her elders, with the holy duty of resignation, squalled in a corner of the cottage . . . We went to sleep.

Next day, we rose early. I had made up my mind to go to Reabovo; but Arcadi Pavlytch evidenced a strong desire to show me over his property, and I accordingly remained with him. I confess that I was curious to see with my own eyes the proofs of the excellent qualities of statesman Sophron. The bourmister made his appearance. He wore the same blue armiak, with a red binding. He spoke less than on the evening before, observed his master with profound attention; and his answers were always acute and well expressed. We went together to the barn. Sophron's son, the starosta, a tall stupid fellow, whose least movement betrayed the arrant blockhead, was likewise of the party; and the march was closed by the inspectorship of works, represented by Fedocéitch, an old soldier, with a prodigious development of moustache, and an expression of countenance of the strangest character. He looked as if he had one day had a horrible fright, and had never been able to recover from it completely. We inspected the barns, the sheep-fold, the sheds and store-houses, the windmill, the cow-houses, and the kitchen-garden and hemp-fields; everything was in the very best order. The pale faces of the peasants alone shocked and disgusted me. Sophron knew how to unite the agreeable with the useful. All the ditches were lined with young hazel-trees; on the barn-floor, the sheafs were piled in regular rows, with neatly sanded walks between them; on the top of the windmill whirled a weather-vane, re-

* A signal employed in the country instead of the usual calls.

presenting a bear with a long red tongue hanging out of his ugly mouth; in the middle of the exterior front of the cow-houses, Sophron had had a façade erected, more or less in the Greek style, on which was an inscription, in the most grotesque white lettering, and almost illegible, to the effect that this range of cow-houses and stables had been erected in 1840.

Arcadi Pavlytch was happy; he expounded to me in French the advantages of the *obroc** system, and gave the bourmister advice on the best way of planting potatoes, preparing drink for cattle, and other agricultural affairs. Sophron listened with attention, sometimes allowing himself to make objections—for he no longer employed the extravagant terms of adulation which had disgusted me so much on the previous evening, and took every opportunity of introducing the remark that the land was very poor, and that it would be necessary to purchase more. "Very well," Arcadi Pavlytch would reply, "get as much money as you can together, and purchase some more fields . . in my name; I have no objections." Sophron's answer was never anything but a silent closing of the eyes, and stroking his beard. "Come, now," said M. Péenotchkin to me, "we must go and see the woods." Saddle-horses were brought, and we were quickly in the depths of dense thickets abounding in game, the sight of which called forth Arcadi Pavlytch's gratitude to Sophron, whom he tapped very affectionately on the shoulder. M. Péenotchkin was a tenacious adherent of the old Russian ideas in regard to the cultivation of wood; and he himself related to me what seemed to him a very pleasant trait of a facetious country gentleman, who, to make his forester comprehend that it is not always true that the

* Letting the land in portions, instead of exacting the usual amount of work from the serfs—three days in each week.

more one takes away the more grows, tore out at one pull almost half his beard.

In other matters, Arcadi Pavlytch and Sophron were neither of them opposed to modern innovations. On our return to the village, the bourmister conducted us to see a fanning-mill recently imported from Moscow. The mill worked capitally; but if Sophron could have foreseen the unpleasant scene that was awaiting us here, he would certainly have deprived us of the pleasure of this exhibition.

A few paces from the shed in which this machine stood, near a pond in which some ducks were enjoying themselves, stood two peasants, the one an old man about seventy, the other a youth about twenty years of age, both in miserably ragged blouses, with a rope round their waists in place of a belt, and barefooted. The local inspector of works was very busy with them, and it is probable he would have succeeded in inducing them to go away, if we had stayed a few moments longer in the shed; but observing us coming out, he stood in the attitude of present-arms, as stiff as a statue, looking utterly unlike the florid gesticulator he usually was. On the ground lay the starosta, with his mouth wide open, and his fists in a convulsive fit of indecision. Arcadi Pavlytch knitted his brows, bit his lips, and walked right up to the group. The two peasants threw themselves at his feet.

"What do you want?...speak," he said, in a severe and slightly nasal tone.

The poor wretches looked at each other, but could not get a word out; they winked as if dazzled by some unusual splendour, and breathed very quick.

"Well, what is this?" resumed Arcadi Pavlytch, turning to Sophron. "What family do these people belong to?"

"The family of Toboléïef," answered the bourmister, slowly.

"Well, what is it you want? have you no tongues, eh? Speak, you! old man, what is it you want? Don't be afraid, you clown."

The old man stretched out his bronzed and wrinkled neck, raised slowly his large blue lip, and said in a voice broken and trembling—

"Help us, my lord!..."

And again he fell with his face to the earth; the young man followed his example. Arcadi Pavlytch regarded with profound gravity the backs of their necks; then changing his attitude, he said—

"What is the matter? whom do you wish to make a complaint against?"

"Pardon, my lord; a moment's breath . . . We are tortured . . . we . . ."

"Who is using you ill?"

"Sophron Jakovlitch, the bourmister."

"Your name?" said my companion after a minute's silence.

"Anthippa, my lord."

"And the young man?"

"He is my son, my lord."

Arcadi Pavlytch was silent again; twirling his moustaches, he added—

"Well, how is it you have been tortured, as you say?" And he looked with a haughty severity at the poor fellow, from between the parting of his stiffly curved moustaches.

"My lord, he has taken everything away from us, and utterly ruined us; he has sent two of my sons to the army against the law, and now he is going to take away the third. No later than yesterday he took away my last cow, and his worship, the starosta, who is a

true son of his, beat my baba. Ah! my good lord! do not allow him to put an end to us altogether."

M. Péenotchkin became very much embarrassed; he coughed several times; and then, with a dissatisfied air, inquired in a low voice of the bourmister what he was to think of such an allegation.

"He is a drunkard, sir," answered the bourmister, with assurance, "a drunkard and a sloth; he won't work; he has not been able to pay his rent for the last five years, sir."

"Sophron Jakovlitch has paid for me, my lord," answered the old man; "it is now five years since he has paid my rent for me; and because he pays for me, he has made me his pledge, his slave, my good lord, and . . ."

"But all this doesn't tell me how you happen to be in arrears," said M. Péenotchkin quickly . . . The old man bowed his head . . . "You drink, don't you, you are always in the tavern?" . . . . The old man opened his mouth to explain . . . "I know you," continued Arcadi Pavlytch; "you spend your time in drinking and lying over the stove, and the hard-working peasant has to pay for you, for . . ."

"And besides, he is rude and unmannerly," added the bourmister, forgetting his own rudeness in interrupting his master.

"Rude! yes, it is always the case, I have often observed it! The idler gives himself up the whole year to drinking and to evil ways, and then he comes some day and throws himself at the feet of his lord."

"My good lord," said the old man in an accent of frightful despair, "in the name of God, help us! And he calls me rude too! Ah! I tell you before God, I have no longer any means of living . . . Sophron Jakovlitch has taken a hatred to me. Why, God

knows, but he has ruined me, crushed me . . . This is my last child . . . ah ! . . . ". A tear coursed down the yellow shrivelled cheeks of the old man. " In the name of God, my good lord, help us ! help us ! . . "

" And it is not us only that he persecutes," said the young peasant.

Arcadi Pavlytch fired at these words of the poor boy, who had been till now so sullenly dumb.

" You ! who asked you to speak ? tell me. If you are not asked, how dare you speak ? What is all this going to come to ? Hold your tongue ! . . . hold your tongue ! . . . Ah ! heavens, it is rebellion ! downright rebellion ! . . . But that won't do with me ; I . . "

Arcadi Pavlytch was going to make some rash movement which he would have no doubt bitterly repented afterwards ; but he probably remembered my presence, for he restrained himself, thrust his hands into his pockets, and turning to me, said in French, in a low tone, and with a forced smile—" *Je vous demande pardon, mon cher ; c'est l'envers du tissu, le mauvais côté de la médaille.*" Then he resumed in Russian, addressing the peasants, but without looking at them—" Very well, very well ; I shall take measures . . . you may go' . . . (the peasants did not move). " Very well, I have told you it is all right . . . go along . . . I shall give orders, I tell you ; go."

Arcadi turned his back upon them, and muttered—" *Toujours des désagréments !*" and strode off rapidly to the bourmister's house ; the overseer followed him. As I did not feel disposed to exert myself, I looked to see what had become of the group. The old soldier with the monstrous moustaches, was shaking his chin, and staring his eyes out of his head. The starosta, having nothing better to do in this conjuncture, amused himself with pelting the ducks to the other side of the pond. The poor petitioners, after remaining

stupified for two minutes, looked at each other, and took their way to their hut, without casting a look behind them."

Two hours after this scene I was at Reaboff, found a peasant whom I knew, called Anpadist, to attend me, and at last felt that I could look forward to a good day's shooting. Up to the time of my leaving, M. Péenotchkin seemed to be rather gruff with Sophron; and I could not help thinking that I had been very unlucky in accepting the morning's invitation to stay and see the place. My mind was so occupied with what I had seen, that in spite of myself, I could not help dropping a few words about M. Péenotchkin, the peasants, and Chipilovka, to Anpadist, and asking him if he knew the bourmister of the place.

"Sophron Jakovlitch?"

"Yes; what sort of a man is he?"

"He's not a man—he is a dog, a dog; there is not his like to be found between this and Koursk."

"What do you say?"

"Ah! sir, Chipilovka has the look of belonging to . . . to this . . . bah! never mind his names* . . . to M. Péenotchkin; but it is not he to whom it belongs; the true proprietor is Sophron—Sophron alone."

"Indeed!"

"He has made an estate for himself out of Chipilovka. Just fancy, there isn't a peasant who is not up to the ears in debt to him, so he has them all under his thumb. He employs them as he likes, sends them where he likes, does with them as he pleases . . . They are nothing but *his* slaves."

"I have heard that they are in rather straitened

* The Christian name of the father, as well as that of the person himself, is employed when addressing or speaking of a person in a respectful manner. Their omission is equivalent to an insult.

circumstances, and that the land is poor, and very little of it."

"Little land! there is no want of land in our districts! Why, Sophron lets eighty acres to the Khlynoskis, and a hundred and twenty acres to some people of our village; *there* are two hundred acres that he can spare—the cunning serpent! But he doesn't trade in lands only; he makes merchandise of everything—horses, cattle, tar and resin, butter and hemp, and a hundred other articles. He is a clever man—a very clever man, and as rich as the Emperor, the scoundrel! But he has a rage for domineering and trampling upon people. He is a dog—a mad dog, he's not a man; I tell you again, he is a savage beast."

"Why do the peasants not complain of him to their real lord?"

"Ah! sir, the proprietor fingers his money; the rent is always paid to a kopeck, and he is satisfied: If anybody complained, what would he do? He would say to the poor fellow, 'Go along, go along . . if you don't . . Very well, go along, take yourself off, or you will be put to rights, you know, as I made my bourmister settle the affairs of so-and-so, or so-and-so.'"

This speech of Anpadist recalled to my mind Anthippa and his son, and I mentioned to him very shortly what I had seen in the morning.

"Ah!" said Anpadist, "Sophron will eat the old fellow, he'll suck the very marrow out of his bones. The starosta, too, for his share, will have a little conversation with him in heavy blows. Ah! poor man! And how did his life of miseries commence? Five or six years ago, he disputed with Sophron about a mere trifle—some other people were present—and he happened to let fall some words that the bourmister has never forgotten. That was enough;

he began from that moment to plague him; he has kept him down ever since, and now he'll ruin him altogether. He knows very well whom he has to do with; he won't lay hands on old men that have money and sons and nephews; but he can do what he likes with old Anthippa. You know, I suppose, he made recruits of his two sons, against the law—the cursed scoundrel that he is!"

We commenced shooting.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNTING HOUSE* OR SERVITUDE IN RUSSIA.

It was autumn; I had already wandered for several hours in the fields, and it is probable I should not have been able to regain before night the post-house on the high road to Koursk, where my troïka† waited for me, if a drizzling cold rain, which had been pouring down upon me with pitiless obstinacy since morning, had not at last obliged me to seek some place of shelter for a few hours at least. While deliberating as to my whereabouts, I spied a kind of sentry-box of the most rustic description close by a bean field: I went up to it, raised a mass of ragged straw-matting before it, which served for a door, and found within a ricketty and feeble old man, who reminded me strongly of the dying goat in Robinson Crusoe's uninhabited island. The old man was seated on his bench, winking his little dull eyes, and deliberately, yet actively, munching like a hare (although he had no teeth), some hard grey pease, which he was rolling from side to side in his yellow mouth, and was so absorbed in this operation that he did not observe me.

* On all baronial estates in Russia, the counting-house means merely the office of the house-steward.

† Carriage with three horses yoked abreast.

"Diedouchka! (good little uncle) Diedouchka!" cried I, "hallo, friend!"

He stopped his munching, raised his eyebrows, and winked his eyes with a certain animation.

"What?" he muttered in a trembling voice.

"Is there a village at hand?" said I.

The old man continued to munch his pease. I repeated my question in a louder tone, perceiving he had not heard me.

"A village? . . . what do you want?"

"I wish a place of shelter from the rain."

"From what, eh?"

"From the rain . . . you see how it rains."

"Yes it pours! . . ." He scratched energetically his bare sunburnt neck . . . "Well, well, go," muttered he with a confused expression, and tossing his arms about like a windmill; "when you have passed the wood . . . when you have passed the wood, I say, you will find one road here, another there; you leave the road there, and, on your right go, go, keep always going . . . you will come to Ananievo; if you miss Ananievo, you will light upon Sitovka."

I scarcely comprehended the old man, his voice was rendered indistinct by his moustaches entering his mouth, and his tongue besides performed its office ill.

"Where do you come from?" asked I.

"What?"

"Where do you come from?"

"From Ananieff."

"What do you do there?"

"What?"

"What do you do? What business do you follow at Ananieff?"

"They sent me here to watch."

"To watch what?"

"The pease."

"Ah! you watch the pease?" said I, scarcely repressing a smile. "Tell me, what age are you?"

"What?"

"How old are you?"

"God knows."

"You do not see well?"

"Eh?"

"Your sight is bad, is'nt it?"

"Yes, it is, and besides, I can't hear anything."

"Well then, what sort of watcher can you be?"

"I don't know, bârin, my superiors would have it so."

"Your superiors, your superiors!" I thought; and I looked with compassion on the poor old man.

He fumbled in his breast, and drew out a piece of bread, which he began to suck like a child—a rather rough exercise for his jaws, already sufficiently weakened.

I walked past the little wood, turned afterwards to the right, and going on, on, always on, as the old man had advised me, came at last to a large village with a stone church built in the modern style—that is to say, ornamented with columns. Before the church was a large baronial house, likewise boasting handsome columns. I had noticed, also, when at a distance, through the thick, slanting, drizzly rain, a house with a wooden roof and two chimneys, higher than the rest of the cottages, and which I took to be the dwelling of the starosta of the village; to this house I directed my steps, hoping to find there a good cup of tea, with some tolerably fresh cream. My dog and I, soaked to the skin as we were, mounted the three outside steps of the house with great glee; I walked into the lobby, opened a door, but, instead of the common appurtenances of

cottages, I saw several tables loaded with papers, two red ledgers, desks bespattered with blots of ink, some ugly pewter sand boxes, a few long pens, and the other accompaniments of an office. At a corner of one of the desks was seated a young man, about twenty years of age, with a bloated sickly face, round little eyes, and a greasy forehead marked with swollen veins. He was suitably dressed in a long cafetan of greasy grey nankin, very shiny at the collar, sleeves, and breast.

"What do you want?" asked he, raising his head rudely, as horses do when one takes them suddenly by the head.

"Does the steward live here? or....."

"This is the chief baronial counting-house," said he, interrupting me without ceremony; "I am a clerk here. Have you not read the sign board? Sign boards are made for people to read."

"I would like to dry myself somewhere. Is there a samovar anywhere in the village?"

"How should there not be a samovar?" fiercely replied he of the grey cafetan; "go to father Timofée's, or rather to his widow's, or perhaps to Nazarr Taracyth's, or better still to Agrafena's, the bird-fancier . . ."

"With whom are you talking there, you fool?—will you let me sleep, blockhead?" said a voice from the next room.

"There is a gentleman here drenched with rain, who wishes to know where he can dry himself."

"Who is the gentleman?"

"I don't know. There is a dog shaking himself in the passage, his master has a gun . . ."

A bed creaked, and some seconds after, a door opened. I saw enter the office a man of about fifty, stout, fat, and short, with a bull-neck, eyes of the colour of cauli-

flower, astonishingly round cheeks—and in short, altogether a very sleek-looking individual.

"What is your pleasure?" he asked.

"I would like to dry myself."

"You have mistaken the door."

"I did not know that this was a counting-house. However, I am ready to pay . . ."

"Well, perhaps one can manage it," replied he.

"Will you walk in?" (he ushered me into a chamber, not the one from which he had just come out himself.) "You won't be uncomfortable here?"

"Not at all. Can I have some tea?"

"Immediately. Take off your coat and make yourself at home; the tea will be ready in five minutes."

"Who is the proprietor of this estate?"

"The Lady Helena Nicolaevna Losniakoff," replied he, on retiring.

I looked round me: against a thin partition which separated my room from the office, was placed a massy divan covered with old leather; on each side of the only window stood a chair, covered with the same material; both had very high backs; the window looked into the street. On the walls, which were hung with paper of a green ground spotted with roses, were three enormous pictures, one representing a dog lying on the ground with a sky-blue collar round his neck, with the inscription, "My delight." At the dog's feet ran a river, and in the distance, on the opposite bank, a well-conditioned hare was seated, which, judging it according to the common laws of perspective, must have been of an incredible size. The other painting represented two old men eating a water melon, while in the back ground rose a Greek portico, on whose façade was inscribed, "The Temple of Abundance." The third picture was the miniature of a woman, remarkable for a prodigious

mass of curls on each side of her head, her red cheeks, and above all, for her great clumsy feet, which every one knows is reckoned a great beauty amongst the sex in Russia. Some one had the humanity to let in my dog. Without waiting a moment, he jumped up on the divan, which must have been full of dust, for he sneezed a good half-hour without intermission.

I looked into the street. There, a long wooden trottoir ran from the counting-house to the baronial mansion; which was certainly a very rational arrangement, for on both sides of the trottoir our good vegetable mould, thoroughly soaked by the rain, had made a sea of mud, frightful even for a country village. Before the signorial abode, which stood with its back to the street, passed the different personages generally to be found about baronial mansions; waiting women in dresses of flowered muslin, came and went in all directions; the men splashed through the puddles, sometimes stopping all at once in a quagmire, and, as an incentive to reflection, scratching the backs of their heads for a considerable time. The horse of a tithing-man, tied to a post, played idly with his tail; or, raising his head, amused himself with gnawing the poles; hens clucked, the turkey-cocks with their inflated breasts impudently kept up an unceasing gabble; on the door-steps of a little, black, worm-eaten building, (probably the bath-house,) was seated a stout lad, singing with great spirit to a Russian guitar accompaniment, a country ballad—

> 'And I hie me away to the wilds,
> Far, far from these beautiful streams."

My host, a fat little thick-set fellow, entered at this moment, and said with a polite air, "Your tea, sir."

The youth in the grey cafetan opened out an old card table, spread upon it a blue cloth, put the samovar

upon it, a cup with a chipped saucer, a pot of cream, and a pile of little Bolkhoff cracknels as hard as flints. My host retired. I asked the clerk if this man was the steward or the overseer of the estate.

"Not at all, sir; that is the cashier; he is the head of the office."

"You have then no steward here?"

"No, we have no steward, but we have a bourmister called Mikhaïlo Vikouloff."

"Have you an overseer?"

"An overseer, ah! yes, Karl Karlytch Lindamandoll; only he superintends nothing—nothing at all."

"Who, then, has the direction of affairs?"

"The bârynia herself."

"Herself! . . . Have you much to do in your office?"

"There are six of us," said the grey cafetan, after a moment's hesitation.

"How, six? who are they?" asked I.

"There is first, Vacili Nicolaevitch, the first cashier, and below him five clerks, Pester, Ivan, Pester's brother, another Ivan, Koskenkin Narkizoff, and myself . . ."

"Does your mistress, then, like to have in her service such a great number of people merely for ostentation?"

"No, I can't say there are a great many."

"Tell me how many there are."

"A hundred and fifty at most."

Both of us were silent for a moment.

"Do you write a good hand?" resumed I.

The lad smiled, showing a mouth from ear to ear, shook his head slightly, went to his desk, and brought me a sheet written with his own hand.

"Here is my hand, you may judge for yourself," said he, with the peculiar smile still on his countenance.

It was a sheet of greyish paper, upon which was drawn out, in form, an order of the day, in a beautiful running hand.

These are the contents :—

PRIKAZ (DECREE).

From the principal counting-house of the signorial mansion of Ananieff to the bourmister Mikhaïlo Vikouloff, No. 209.

You are hereby commanded to search out with all diligence, immediately on receipt of this, those who, last night, in a state of drunkenness, and singing unbecoming songs, broke into the English garden, and disturbed and awoke the French lady Madame Angenis; to let me know also who was on duty in the garden, what the watchmen were about, when they allowed such disturbances to take place. You are ordered to subject this matter to the strictest scrutiny, and to deliver your report without delay at the office.

The first clerk,

NICOLAI KVASTOFF.

To this order was appended a seal three inches in diameter, the seal of the head signorial counting-house of Ananieff. Beneath the seal was added in a free hand :—"To be executed with rigour, Helena Iosniakoff."

"Is it the lady herself who has countersigned this, eh?" I enquired of the clerk, quite enchanted with this counting-house curiosity.

"Yes, herself; always madame, always herself; without it, the order you have seen would be of no more value than an oak leaf."

"Are you going to send that to the bourmister?"

"No, he will come for it; and they will read it to

him, for our bourmister can't read" . . . (A pause.) "Eh ?" resumed the clerk with his peculiar smile, which made his sleek chin look like a Crimean apple; "is it well . . . is it well written?"

"Yes, very well."

"I ought to tell you that this paper is not my composition; it is the clerk Koskénkin's, who is a ready hand at all these things."

"How! are the rough drafts of these prikaz, then, drawn up in the office?"

"Yes, certainly. You don't expect one to write such a thing as that so nicely all at once?"

"What salary do you receive?"

"Thirty-five roubles, and five extra for boots."

"Are you contented, eh?"

"Of course, quite. It is a great thing with us to get into a counting-house; it is not every one who can aspire so high. Thank God, I have been highly favoured; I got my situation through my uncle, who is in her ladyship's household."

"Do you find everything quite agreeable, then?"

"Yes, quite . . . To speak the truth, however," he resumed with a sigh, "merchants' clerks are much better off than we are; very much better. Yesterday evening a merchant of Veneff came in, and I had some talk with the lad at present with him. No matter, I am well enough here, I have nothing to complain of . . ."

"Do the merchants give better salaries?"

"God bless me! a merchant hits the lad who presumes to ask for his salary a blow on the head, and kicks him out of doors. No, no, in a merchant's service you must live in faith and trembling; but then, he gives you meat, drink, clothes, everything. You please him . . . he gives you more and more. As for salary,

you must not speak a word on the subject. The merchant doesn't make any show; he lives in the good old Russian fashion, just like ourselves. If you are travelling with him, and he is taking tea, you take tea also. A merchant . . . there is no comparison: he is not a bârin, certainly not. The merchant doesn't take any roundabout way of going to work; if he is angry, he beats you firmly, and there is an end of it. But with the lords, Heaven pity us! nothing is good enough for a bârin: this is bad; that does not please him. You give him a glass of water, you hand him a dish: 'Ah, this water is putrid! this bird or fish is tainted!' You carry it away, remain a moment behind the door, and carry back the fish, or the roast meat, or the glass of water, in the very same condition as it was at first: 'Ah! that's the thing, this water is good, that fish is quite fresh' . . . And the ladies—ah! the ladies—that is quite another thing; and the young ladies . . . that is a . . ."

A loud voice was heard in the counting-house, calling "Fedeouchka!" The clerk vanished precipitately.

After tea, I stretched myself on the divan, and fell asleep. I slept well for about two hours; and on awaking, I deliberated whether I should sit up or rise at once; idleness prevailed, I closed my eyes, but without being able to sleep. In the counting-house, which was only separated from my room by a thin partition, some one was talking in a low voice. I could not help hearing, and soon took pleasure in listening.

"Bah! bah! Nicolaï Eréméitch," said an unknown voice, "you ought to take that also into consideration; let us agree about it—hem . . hem" . . (this person seemed to have a cold.)

"Ah! that's it, Gavrill Antonytch," rejoined my

host, "I know pretty well how matters stand here; you know best about affairs over there."

"Who should know them better, Nicolaï Eréméitch? You are here, one may say, the foremost of the foremost. Well then, what shall we agree to? let me ask you."

"You know quite well, Gavrill Antonytch, that the business is in your hands; everything depends on you alone; but it seems you have no desire to bring it to a termination."

"What do you say? Nicolaï Eréméitch, we merchants are always quite ready to purchase. Your price —come, Nicolaï Eréméitch, that's the main point."

"Eight roubles . . . eight roubles!" said the head of the counting-house slowly.

The unknown sighed in a rather forced manner, as it seemed to me, and said—"Ah! Nicolaï Eréméitch, you ask far too much."

"It is impossible, Gavrill Antonytch, to treat on other terms; it is quite impossible."

So long a pause here ensued that I thought they had parted. I was deceived. To assure myself of this, I had the curiosity to look through a chink in the partition, and saw my host with his back turned to me. In front of me was a merchant about forty years of age, with a thin pale face, and an oily complexion. He kept constantly running his fingers through his beard, winked at times, and drew his lower lip down in such a way as to cause it to assume the appearance of a white heart-cherry.

"The crops this year are in the most splendid condition," resumed the merchant in a very natural tone; "from Voronej to this I have done nothing but admire the wheat and the oats; the clover too, and the hay! First quality, first quality, I tell you."

"Yes, yes, the crops are good," said my host with

an air of unconcern; "but you know, Gavrill Antonytch, autumn deals the cards, spring plays the game."

"True, Nicolaï Eréméitch, very true, everything is in God's hands; you have spoken truly . . And the gentleman in there, he is surely asleep?"

My host applied his ear to the partition and listened awhile; my dog snored.

"He is sleeping; he is wet, jaded, quite worn out. . . . Let us see, however."

He came to the door, looked through the key-hole, but was unable to perceive me; he listened, and was apparently deceived by the snoring of Diana.

"How he sleeps! O!" added he, taking his place against the partition.

"Well, let us see, Nicolaï Eréméitch," resumed the chapman; "we must settle our little piece of business . . . Look you, Nicolaï Eréméitch, look you," winking still more, and bringing out his words slowly, as one strips the beads off a necklace to keep himself in countenance, "two grey and a white for you . . . and down there," jerking his head in the direction of the baronial mansion, "down there, six and a half. Come, a bargain."

"Four grey," uttered the head of the counting-house.

"Well, three . . . done."

"Four grey and no white."

"Three, Nicolaï Eréméitch."

"Three and a half, and not a kopeck less."

"Three, Nicolaï Eréméitch."

"We can't deal then, Gavrill Antonytch."

"There is no doing business with you," muttered the merchant. "Well, I will settle the affair much better with the lady."

"You are your own master," my host coldly rejoined.

"Why did you not go straight to her at first? you are losing time by coming here; yes, that would be better, much better."

"There, there, there; let us put an end to the business, Nicolaï Eréméitch . . . why trouble yourself about such trifles? you know quite well my way of speaking; come now."

"Why not?"

"Eh, I was joking; you might easily have seen that it was all in fun. Well, then, you shall have three and a half. What do you say to that?"

"I must have four grey. I have made up my mind, you foolish fellow, and won't take any less," murmured my host.

"You play your cards well; down there for the lady, six and a half, Nicolaï Eréméitch, six and a half; the wheat is sold at six and a half, eh?"

"Well, done, done, Nicolaï Eréméitch." (The merchant struck his long spider-like fingers into the hand of the seller.) "Well, now, Nicolaï Eréméitch, you are a respectable fellow. I shall go and announce myself to your lady, and tell her that we have concluded a bargain, you and me, and that I think you have bled me pretty considerably, and that six and a half is the price fixed."

"That is just what you ought to say, Gavrill Antonytch."

"Take that, then."

The merchant put into my host's hand a pretty large bundle of bank-notes, stooped, shook his head, seized his hat with two fingers, shrugged his shoulders, and went out, making a great noise with his boots in the wooden passage—all ceremonies considered to be in perfectly good taste. Nicolaï Eréméitch went and made a face at the wall, and began silently to examine the

contents of the packet which he held in his hand. The door opened, a red head was thrust in, ornamented with thick and long curls.

"Well! what?" said the red head, "is it all right?"

"Yes, all right."

"How much?"

My host, vexed at this indiscreet expression, made a motion with his hand, and pointed to my chamber.

"Yes, yes, I know," said the red head, and shut the door. My host approached a table, seated himself, took in one hand an account-book, and in the other a *stchety*,* and began to work the balls backwards and forwards, not with his forefinger, but with his thumb—no doubt, the most elegant way of working the instrument.

A clerk entered.

"What do you want?"

"Sidor has come from Goloplëk."

"Well, let him come in... Stop... stop... hush, give a look into that room, and see if the gentleman is sleeping or not. Go softly."

The clerk cautiously entered the room in which I was. I put my head upon my game bag, of which I had made a temporary cushion, and shut my eyes for the nonce. I had my reasons for remaining quiet. First, my limbs had still need of repose, and I could only get that by remaining in a recumbent position; besides, I did not wish to be troublesome under the roof which sheltered me; above all, I enjoyed the comedy that was going on, for in the provinces one has rarely the pleasure of seeing one performed. Moreover, as proprietor of an estate, I could not fail to be profited and edified by seeing how every

* A little square open box, provided with brass wires, on which glide bone or ivory balls, used by the Russians in arithmetical operations.

thing was arranged and managed on an estate where the best order seemed to be established.

"He is sleeping," whispered the clerk, after shutting the door gently.

My host muttered something between his teeth, and after some moments' silence, said to the clerk: "Good! Tell him to walk in, and warn him to make no noise."

I got up and looked: a moujik about six feet high entered, about thirty years of age, strong, fresh-coloured, with fair hair and a short frizzled beard. He bowed three times while crossing himself before an image of a saint, took his cap off with both hands, and stood bolt-upright.

"Good day, Sidor," said my host, rapidly running over the counters of his stchety.

"Good day, Nicolas Eréméitch."

"How are the roads?"

"In good condition—a little muddy, however, Nicolas Eréméitch," said the peasant slowly in a low tone.

"Is your wife well?"

"Tolerably well."

The peasant sighed, and placed one foot before another. My host stuck his pen behind his ear, and blew his nose.

"What brings you here?" said my host, replacing his pocket handkerchief in his pocket.

"Confound it, they are asking for carpenters, Nicolas Eréméitch."

"Well, what's the matter? Are there none!"

"How should there not be any, since there is plenty of wood on the estate here? But we have very hard work just now."

"Hard work! Pretty fellows indeed; you like to go tramping about, working for people who have no connection with us; but you don't care a jot to work for

the mistress. Work here, work there—what business have you to do that?"

"'Tis always working, it is true, Nicolaï Eréméitch . . . but, however . . ."

"Well, speak, speak."

"My wages here . . ."

"Your wages are small, eh? See how we have spoiled you, my friend!"

"If I must say all, Nicolaï Eréméitch, my work here will take me only six days, and I shall have to spend a month about it. Either materials are wanting, or we are sent to clean the garden walks."

"You have a whole cart-load of reasons, I know, but the bârynia herself has condescended to give the order, and neither you nor I have anything to say in the matter, you see."

Sidor was silent, and amused himself by putting one foot before the other.

Nicolas Eréméitch bent his head to one side, and applied himself diligently to his accounts.

"We . . . moujiks . . . Nicolas Eréméitch," said Sidor at last, hanging upon every word, "have been ordered to . . . give . . . to your grace . . . here, you will find . . ."

He shoved his huge hand into his armiak, and drew out something or other wrapped up in a piece of linen with a red border—it was probably a piece of fine cloth.

"What are you doing, what are you doing, stupid?" said my honourable host, looking at him with a placid air; "go away, go, go to my house," added he, almost pushing the astonished moujik out of the door. "Go to my house, my wife will give you some tea, do you hear; I will come home immediately, go now, and don't be afraid; I tell you, go."

Sidor left the office.

"What a bear," muttered the head of the counting-house, shaking his head, and resuming his stchety.

All at once a noise arose outside, and afterwards on the door steps, "Kouprian! Kouprian! Kouprian! oh! Kouprian has not his equal here." Some moments after there entered the counting-house, a man of low stature, unprepossessing exterior, a nose of immeasurable length, great motionless doll-like eyes, and a ludicrously haughty air. He was clothed in an old ragged frock coat of a russet colour, with a plush collar, and buttons of the smallest size. He had a load of firewood on his back. He was surrounded by five or six men all shouting at the top of their voices—"Kouprian! here is Kouprian, who has been promoted to the office of lighter of the stoves, lighter of the stoves, lighter of the stoves!" But the haughty Kouprian did not honour his riotous escort with the slightest attention; he never moved a muscle of his countenance; he walked up to the stove with measured steps, threw off his load, straightened himself, drew an old snuff box from one of the pockets of his coat, and stuffed into his nose some grey snuff, of which ashes formed at least a third part.*

On the entrance of this noisy crowd, my host knitted his eyebrows, and rose from his seat; but seeing it was nothing more than a crowd of idlers tormenting a poor devil, he smiled, and contented himself with commanding silence, adding—"There is a gentleman inside sleeping."

"Who is the gentleman?" asked two at once.

"A bârin."

"Ah!"

"Let them roar to their heart's content," said he

* The Russian snuff, used by the poorer classes, is known to contain a great quantity of ashes.

of the plush collar, with a slight wave of his hand ; 'tis of no consequence, if they don't touch me. They have made me a stove-lighter . . ."

"Stove-lighter, stove-lighter! Kouprian, a stove-lighter," said the crowd merrily in a whisper.

"The bârynia," replied Kouprian, "has ordered it so, and it is well; but you, she will send you to watch the hogs, and that will be nothing but justice. Though I am a tailor, I am a good one, I learnt my trade with the first tailors in Moscow, I have worked for generals, yes, for generals—an honour which no one can take from me. And you raff, what do you know, what trade do you follow? Let us see; you are gluttons, good-for-nothings —not a bit better. If I could get a passport,* I would go away, I would not die of hunger—no, not I; I would fall upon my feet, I would pay a good tribute, I would satisfy the lord. And you, what are you? I would not give a snap of my fingers for you, you will die like flies and such like vermin!"

"Hear his nonsense! hear him!" said a young boy, much pitted with the small pox, with light eye lashes and eye brows, a red collar on his coat, and his sleeves out at elbows. "You had once a passport, and your master never saw a single kopeck of your tribute, and you did not lay past a single one for yourself; they were forced to send you back here with your feet in irons, and since your arrival, we have never seen another coat on you but the rags you have on just now."

"What could I do, Konstantin Narkizytch?" replied Kouprian mildly; "love has ruined me, as it has done many a one. Ah! Konstantin Narkizytch, go through what I have gone through, I tell you, and after that, judge and condemn me, if you can."

* A document issued by a master empowering his serf to ply a trade.

"And who the devil would have encouraged such a sorry wretch as you, you ill shaped booby?"

"Don't speak so, Konstantin Narkizytch."

"What will you have us believe? I saw your lady-love last year in Moscow; she was the very thing . . ."

"Last year? it is true that she was not looking well last year; but before that . . ."

"Stop that, gentlemen," said a man in a haughty tone, tall, lean, his face studded with warts, with his hair frizzled, pomaded, probably my lady's valet; "let him only sing his favourite song immediately, and in the best style, and we won't badger him any more. Come on now, begin, Kouprian Afanacytch."

"Yes, yes," cried the rest; "bravo, Alexandra,* well thought of, a good fellow is Alexandra; let's hear, let's hear the song, Kouprian; pipe up! go a-head!"

"This is not a suitable place," said Kouprian firmly; "this is the baronial counting-house."

"What are you thinking about, you fool . . . Ah! you have an eye to a clerkship," said Konstantin with a choking laugh; "that's it, that's it!"

"But it seems to me that everything here depends on my lady's pleasure," replied this unfortunate piece of vanity.

"Just think what this miracle of activity aspires to! Ho! ho! ho!"

A loud roar of laughter followed; at this moment I entertained the notion of going out by the window that I might escape hearing more of it; but as that seemed impracticable, I decided to stay and see the comedy played out, especially as I could do so without personal inconvenience. Amongst the good humoured crowd of menials that surrounded the door, was one who roared

* Domestic servants often give a feminine termination to the names of men whom they like or wish to be agreeable to.

louder than the rest—a boy about fifteen years of age, very likely a son of one of the upper servants; he had on a waistcoat with leather buttons, a cravat with the ends hanging down, and trousers which had not kept pace with his growth.

"Ah! Kouprian," said my host with a jocose air, evidently much tickled at the idea of Kouprian's being attached to the office, "come now, agree with me, don't you think it a hard thing to be a stove-lighter? Yes, yes, for a man of your intellect, it must be a stupid business."

"Well, what of it, Nicolaï Eréméitch," replied Kouprian; "you are just now head of the counting-house; very good; I can't dispute this post with you, it is true; but you once were in misfortune yourself, and lived in a miserable hut like any other peasant."

"Go on, but see and pull yourself up before you have got too far," said big Nicolaï angrily, "you fool—you clown—a drudge to everybody; you ought to thank your stars that anybody has a single word to say to such a fool as you."

"Well, excuse me, Nicolaï Eréméitch; expressions such as these made all this noise."

"Expressions! you ninny—expressions!"

The door opened, and a Kazatchok* entered, and said to my host—

"Nicolaï Eréméitch, my lady wants you."

"Who is with her?" enquired he of the boy.

"Akcinia Nikitichna and a Veneff merchant."

"Well, I'm coming. You there," added he blandly, "go away immediately, and let our new stove-lighter alone; for if you don't, Karl Karlytch the German may happen to pass this way, and he will make a row about it."

* Message boy in a Cossack uniform.

My host smoothed his hair, coughed in his hand, which was almost invariably concealed by his long hanging sleeve, buttoned his voluminous frock cafetan well about him, and left for the house of the bârynia—his great splay feet flopping heavily on the wooden causeway. The group of servants was not long in following him, passing singly by Kouprian, whom they had tried to crow down, but who was in no ways daunted. There remained only in the counting-house my good friend the clerk in the grey cafetan. He had been pretending to make pens, but, in fact, had fallen asleep. Some flies were turning the opportunity to their advantage, and their bodies, closely packed together, formed a dark moustache which extended over his upper lip, whilst a large stinging gnat had set himself upon a prominent vein of his forehead, and, inserting his sting, sucked the blood at pleasure.

The red head with the enormous whiskers again appeared at intervals at the half-open door; he looked to the right and left, and at last walked into the counting-house, bringing to view a countenance in which baseness but too well accorded with what I had before seen of his physiognomy.

"Fedeouchka! Fedeouchka! are you sleeping?" said the fiery head.

The clerk opened his eyes, and at once rose and said in a tone of confidence—

"Nicolaï Eréméitch has gone to the house of the bâryn[illegible], Vacili Nicolaevitch."

"Come, you did not see that in your sleep, did you?" Ah! said I to myself, he called him Vacili Nicolaevitch; this red-headed fellow is then first cashier. At the same time I passed my hand over my clothes to see if they were dry; but they were still quite wet. I then made up my mind to stay half an hour longer.

The first cashier then began to walk about and examine everything in the room. He glided rather than walked, suggesting the idea of a cat examining a granary. An old black coat, with a long swallow tail, covered his back; he held one hand in his breast, and with the other kept pulling up, from time to time, a high stiff horse-hair collar, which kept his head in a ludicrously constrained position. He wore thin-soled boots of Cordovan leather, and his tread was as soft as if he had been shod with moccasons.

"The lord Jakouchkin, whom you know, came to-day to enquire for you," said the clerk.

"Ah! he enquired for me? what did he say?"

"He said that he would pass the night at Tuturoff, and would expect you there. 'I have,' said he, 'some business to transact with him.' He did not say about what, but he added that you knew."

"Good," said the cashier, and went to the window.

"Is Nicolaï Eréméitch in the counting-house?" cried a loud voice in the little lobby, and a man of tall stature, evidently in a furious rage, with irregular but expressive and bold features, and pretty well dressed, opened the door, and threw himself into the room at a bound, saying—"He is not here, where is he?"

"Nicolaï Eréméitch is at the bârynia's," replied the cashier. "What do you want? tell me, Pavel Andréitch; you can let me know your business. Come, tell me."

"What do I want? You wish to know what I want?" (The cashier bowed solemnly.) "I wish to give a lesson to that miserable tun-bellied fool—that vile seducer."

He threw himself into a chair.

"What is the matter with you, Pavel Andréitch? calm yourself . . . Have you no conscience? Think of

whom you are speaking, Pavel Andréitch," stammered the cashier.

"Of whom I am speaking! What care I though he is the head of the office? They have found their man, in faith; one may truly say they have allowed the goat to get into the kitchen garden."

"Stop, stop, Pavel Andréitch, stop that; don't talk such nonsense."

"Good! the fox has gone to play his tricks before the bârynia. I shall wait for Nicolaï here," said Pavel, striking his fist on the table. . . . "Well, here he comes in the very nick of time. I will receive him in his counting-house this time."

As Pavel rose, Nicolaï Eréméitch entered. His face was radiant with inward satisfaction; but on seeing Pavel, he could not help feeling annoyed.

"Good day, Nicolaï Eréméitch," said Pavel, in a significant tone, advancing slowly to meet him. "Good day."

The head of the office said not a word. At the door appeared the spare figure of the merchant, whose bargain he had come doubtless to ratify.

"Well, I can't expect that you should take the trouble to reply, eh?" said Pavel, in a high tone; but he immediately lowered his voice while saying to himself: "Well, no . . . no . . . I must not go about the business in this way. Exclamations and insults won't lead to any thing. Well, look you, Nicolaï Eréméitch, tell me, once for all, why you persecute me, why you wish to ruin me, eh? Come, tell me, tell me."

"This is not the place for the explanations you demand," said my host, not without agitation; "and the time, too, is ill chosen. I am quite astonished at this —this odd idea you have got into your head, that I wish to ruin and persecute you; how could I? You don't belong to the office; you are not under me."

"I could not be more unhappy than I am, if I were under you. Why this treatment, Nicolaï Erémeïtch? You understand me."

"No, I don't."

"Yes indeed, you understand me."

"Not at all; by heaven I do not."

"Don't mix heaven up in the matter . . . You have some fear of God; be it so. Well, then, explain to me why you won't allow my poor sweetheart to live in peace; what do you mean by it?"

"What girl are you speaking of, Pavel Andréitch?" said my host, in a tone of profound astonishment.

"Poor innocent! he doesn't know. I am speaking of Tatiana. Yes, yes, cross yourself; but tell me, what injuries have you to revenge? . . . none. Blush a little at least; fie upon you! a married man with children as tall as myself! . . . And what do I want? I want to marry, and do well and honourably by the girl."

"How do you know that it is my fault, Pavel Andréitch? The bârynia does not wish you to marry; it is the signorial pleasure; what can I do in the matter?"

"Ah! and perhaps you will say that you are not art and part with this vile old sorceress, when you whisper together, when you seek to seduce the young woman, and when, piqued at her refusal, you slander and blacken the character of the poor girl. Don't deny that it was by your instigation that she was degraded from her place of laundress to that of scullion, and that they put her in the lower storey, and cuffed and drove her about. Shame on you! be ashamed of yourself, you old fool! You had once a stroke of apoplexy . . . take care . . . You are not in a very good way just now . . . It won't be long before you will have to give an account to a judge who sees more clearly than the bârynia."

"Make haste, Pavel Andréitch, and empty your bag of insults. You won't have long to do it."

Pavel here flew into a furious passion, and, for my part, I had long been desirous to escape from my disagreeable prison.

"How! he dares to threaten me," said Pavel, in a rage. "Do you imagine I am afraid of you? You have found a good drudge, on my word! Don't you think that I can gain my livelihood anywhere? But you —it is very different with you; it is only in such a place as this that you can live, and bribe, and pilfer, and . . . "

"A blade who knows himself thoroughly," interrupted my host, who, on his side, began to lose his temper; "a sawbones, a surgeon at a penny fee, a doctor without a certificate . . . But to listen to him—oh! oh! what a consequential gentleman!"

"Good! a sawbones . . . But without this sawbones, you would have been rotting long ago in the graveyard" . . . And he muttered between his teeth, "I have a good mind to trample this beast under my feet!"

"You would make me believe that you cured me, eh? You wished to poison me; yes, you made me drink a decoction of aloes, to bring about my death."

"Nothing but aloes could have saved you, you black-hearted wretch!"

"Aloes is prohibited in the police code of medicine," pursued Nicolaï . . . "I see that I must lodge my complaint with the authorities. You wished to make away with me, and God alone delivered me out of your hands."

"Stop, stop, gentlemen," said the cashier.

"Get out of that," cried my host; "this furious fellow had a mind to poison me; do you understand me?"

"Your death would have been some blessing," said Pavel, ironically, but with a look of mental anguish

"Listen, Nicolaï Eréméitch, I implore you for the last time . . . You have driven me to despair; I shan't restrain myself any longer, look you . . . I pray you, do not annoy me . . . do not annoy me . . . if you do, I take God to witness, that one of us two will go *there* sooner than you fancy."

"I don't fear you," cried the big man, "you are nothing—nothing. Listen to me, you baby: I once had a dispute with your father, and gave him a thorough drubbing; look to yourself, and take care."

"Ah! do not speak of my father, Nicolaï Eréméitch; don't name him!"

"Ah, the fellow lays down the law to me."

"Don't mention my father."

"And you—don't you forget yourself . . . As your services are not required by the bârynia, if one of us two must leave, you will scarcely be retained here, my pretty fellow; remember that you cannot rebel against your owner," (Pavel quivered with rage.) "Tatiana is punished when she deserves it . . . if you meddle, she will see something very different."

Pavel rushed out, his fists clenched and raised aloft, and meeting the clerk, who happened to be in his way, threw him heavily to the ground, whilst Nicolaï Eréméitch cried out at the top of his voice—"The handcuffs! the handcuffs! put handcuffs on him!"

I will not take it upon me to describe the termination of this scene, as I fear much that the delicacy of the reader has been already shocked, and that he has suffered as much as I.

Before nightfall, I was on my way home. A week after, I heard that Madam Losniakoff had decided to retain in her service both Pavel and Nicolaï, but that she had sent Tatiana away to a distant village. My readers will of course understand that the lady had no occasion for her services

CHAPTER XII.

FOMA THE BIREOUK.*

I RETURNED from shooting in the evening alone, in my béegovaïadrochka.† I had still eight versts to travel; my mare went at a long, steady, rapid pace over the dusty road, snuffing up the air from time to time, and shaking her ears. My dog, tired as he was, trotted after me as if he were attached to the car—so regularly did he follow, preserving the distance of half a pace from the wheels. A storm was gathering in the air. A huge storm cloud of a light violet colour drew up slowly from behind the forest above me, and mingled with the long grey clouds; the hazels waved to and fro, shivered and rustled with a soughing sound, without any appearance of wind. The heat, which was suffocating, suddenly changed to a moist freshness; the darkness increased. I struck the flank of my mare with the reins. I came down from the car in a ravine which intersected the road, crossed the dry bed of the torge, which was overgrown with briars, climbed the steep slope before me, and entered the wood. The road wound here between close thickets of hazel, already quite dark. I advanced, but with great

* Bireouk is the term in the district of Orel for a silent morose person, who lives apart from the rest of the world.

† A light car, consisting simply of a seat between two wheels.

difficulty; my slender carriage struck against the old roots of oaks and limes stretching out at intervals from marshy pools, and was almost broken to pieces by the sudden plunges we were constantly making into deep ruts; my horse was soon covered with foam. All at once a strong wind struck the heights, the trees groaned, large drops of rain sounded heavily among the leaves, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed—the hurricane was let loose. Torrents of rain fell from the clouds at once. I rushed under a tree; there, crouching down, my face wrapped up in my cloak, I armed myself with patience to wait for the end of the storm, when suddenly, by the glare of a lightning flash I saw on the road the tall figure of a man, whose movements I followed with attention. The figure seemed to grow in size as it approached my light vehicle.

"Who is there?" cried a sonorous voice.

"Who are *you*?" I answered.

"I am the keeper of the forest."

I mentioned my name; he said, "Ah! I know. You are returning home?"

"Yes, I wish to do so. This *is* a hurricane, brother."

"It really is."

A pale flash lighted up the figure of the forester from head to foot. A short, quick thunderclap followed the lightning instantaneously. The rain lashed the air with redoubled violence.

"It will not be over in a hurry," said the forester.

"What must I do?"

"Suppose you come to my house?" he replied, in a rough tone.

"With pleasure."

"Get up, then."

He advanced to the head of the horse, seized the bridle, and pulled her out of the slough. We set off. I clung to the cushion, which undulated on the seat

like a canoe on a tossing sea. I was vexed to see my poor Diana labouring through the mire, sometimes sliding into it, sometimes sinking deeper from her struggles to extricate herself, but never mistaking or disobeying my commands. The forester, seated nearer the shafts, bent sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right, and seemed in the dark night like a troubled phantom. We proceeded in this way for some time; at last my guide stopped, and said in a tranquil tone of voice, "Here we are arrived, bârin." A window-shutter creaked upon its hinges, and several dogs were barking with all their might. I raised my head, and, by the glare of a flash of lightning, I saw a little cabin in the middle of a clearing, surrounded by piles of wood, heaped up cross-wise. Through a little window, a feeble light was visible. The forester led the horse up to the door steps, and knocked at the door. "Who's there? Who's there?" cried the voice of a child; the patter of naked feet reached my ears; the door was opened, and a little girl of twelve years of age, her chemise tightened to her shape by woollen bands, and holding a lantern in her hand, appeared on the threshold.

"Show the gentleman in," said my guide to her; "I shall go and put up the horse and drochka."

The girl looked at me, and turning, led the way: I followed her.

The keeper's cottage contained but a single chamber, which was full of smoke, low, unfurnished, without any roof but the beams. A ragged toulup hung on the black wall. On a seat lay a single-barrelled gun, in a corner a heap of rags; two large pots stood near the fire-place. On the table stood a piece of iron bearing a loutchin* which was burning dimly, and almost expiring. In the middle of the room hung a cradle sus-

* A loutchin is a piece of fir or pine wood used to light a chamber.

pended from the extremity of a long pole, the other end of which was fixed in the wall of the house. The little girl extinguished the light in her lantern, and seated herself upon a low stool; and with one hand rocked the cradle, with the other replaced the burnt out loutchin. I observed all this with a sad heart; it is not a pleasant thing to go at night into the hut of a peasant. The baby in the cradle breathed quickly and painfully.

"You are alone here?" said I to the girl.

"Alone," she replied, hardly opening her mouth.

"You are the daughter of the forester?"

"His daughter, yes," she murmured.

The door creaked, and the keeper entered, bending his tall form. He took up the lantern which the girl had laid on the ground, lighted a match, and shaking his curled locks, said—

"You are not accustomed to the light of our loutchins." I looked at my host; it had seldom been my fortune to see a man so well formed, tall, with broad shoulders, an immense chest, and of perfect proportions. Through the rents in the sleeves of his patched shirt were visible his powerful muscles; his black waving beard covered half of his face; his features were masculine and austere; from beneath long and shaggy eyebrows shot piercing glances from his small watchful eyes. He set his arms akimbo, and stood erect before me.

I thanked him for giving me shelter, and asked his name.

"My name is Foma; people nickname me the Bireouk."

"Ah! it is you who are called the Bireouk."

I looked at him with redoubled curiosity. Ermolaï and other individuals had often told me stories about the forester Bireouk, who was dreaded by all the pea-

sants of the country. To believe them, there had never existed so active a man; it was impossible to steal the least fagot or the smallest armful of dead wood; whatever hour of the day or night it might be, he fell upon you, silently, suddenly, like the snow. And it was useless to try to bribe or to deceive him; wine, money, prayers, cunning—nothing succeeded; traps had been twenty times laid for his life; he laughed at them all. These were the common stories of the peasants.

"It is you who are called Bireouk," I repeated. "Ah! brother, I have heard you often spoken of; they say that you have not your equal in oppressing poor people."

"I do my duty," he replied, in a very serious tone; "I wish to gain honestly the bread my master gives me." He drew from his belt a long-bladed hatchet, seated himself on the floor, and began to cut loutchins.

"You have no wife," I said.

"No," answered he, and proceeded busily with his work.

"She is dead?"

"No . . . Yes, if you like, she is dead."

I was silent, he raised his eyes and looked at me, then added, with a bitter smile, "She ran away with a merchant who was travelling through the country."

The infant awoke and began to cry; the little girl, who was instinctively hiding her confusion with her hands, rose and looked into the cradle. "Here," said the Bireouk, "give it that." And he handed her a small cup of milk. "She left me—I care not—but she abandoned that poor little child," he resumed in a low voice, pointing to the cradle. He rose and went to the door, stopped, and then returned to his seat. "Ah! bârin, you would not like our bread, and it happens

just now, and indeed almost always, that we have nothing else in the house."

"I am not hungry."

"I baked some bread five days ago; it is all I can offer you. It is useless putting on the samovar; I have no tea. Well, I shall go and see how your mare is."

He went out, and shut the door after him. I again cast my eyes over the apartment; it appeared to me still more sombre than before. The pungent odour of smoke pained my nostrils and throat.

The girl never changed her position, and kept her eyes fixed on the floor; now and then she rocked the cradle; then she would modestly pull her chemise over her shoulders; her naked feet hung without motion.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Oulita," she replied, her saddened countenance becoming still more depressed.

The forester re-entered the room, and seated himself on the bench.

"The hurricane is passing off," said he, after a moment's silence; "if you command me, I shall accompany you to the edge of the wood."

I rose. The forester took his gun, and examined the priming.

"Why take your gun?" said I.

"Down there, on the side of the ravine of Kobouyl, somebody is cutting wood," he said, in reply rather to my severe look than to my question.

"As if you could hear them from this distance!"

"From the yard I can hear a good deal farther."

We went out together. The rain had ceased. In the distance we could still see enormous clouds crowding together. Long flashes of lightning illuminated the horizon, but right above us the sky was of a dark blue, and some stars were visible between the rifts of the

driving rain-clouds. The outlines of the trees, agitated by the wind, began to be distinguishable. We listened. The forester took off his cap and leaned forward. "You see," said he, pointing to the west, "what a night they have chosen."

I had as yet heard nothing but the rustling of the foliage.

"Very well, that will do," added he, going up to my horse, and bringing the drochka to me. "I shall make them smart for it."

"Leave my horse here," I said; "I would like to go with you to the ravine; allow me to follow you."

"Good; we shall lay hold of them in a trice, and when we return, I shall accompany you; come along."

We set out; he walked along rapidly, and I followed him at a short distance. I could not comprehend how he shaped his course so directly. He stopped now and then, but it was only to discover the exact point from whence sounded the stroke of the hatchet. "Listen, listen! ah! you hear it now?" "No; where is it?" The Bireouk shrugged his shoulders. We descended the side of a ravine; there the wind seemed to be somewhat lulled, and I heard distinctly the sound of measured strokes. The Bireouk looked at me, and shook his head without speaking. We continued our course among long fern and wet thistles; a prolonged dull sound echoed through the glen. "The tree is down," said the Bireouk. Meanwhile the sky continued to clear, but in the wood we could hardly see three paces before us. We at last reached the end of the ravine. He stooped down, and holding his gun above his head, disappeared, creeping among the bushes. I listened with eagerness. I heard, at no great distance, the sound of sharp, light strokes against the branches, as if they were being stripped from the tree. I heard the rumbling

of wheels and the snort of a horse. "Stand!" shouted all of a sudden a voice of thunder. Another voice, but in a mournful tone, replied; the sounds became confused; they were struggling. "You are mad! old fool, you are mad," cried the Bireouk; "you shall not escape me." I rushed towards the place, stumbling at every step, and reached with great difficulty the stump of the fallen tree. The forester had thrown the peasant against the tree; he kept him under, and was binding the poor fellow's hands, crossed behind his back, with his belt. This done, he rose, and set the thief on his legs. The poor wretch was soaked with the rain, his clothes hung in tatters, his beard was dirty and disordered. A lank, miserable horse, half covered with a piece of matting, stood not far off. The forester spoke not a word; the peasant was also silent, only now and then shaking his head and sighing.

"Let him go," I whispered to the forester, "I shall pay the price of the tree." No answer.

The Bireouk led the horse with his left hand, and with his right held fast the thief.

"Come on, ragamuffin," said the forester roughly.

"And the hatchet! the hatchet!" muttered the peasant.

"Well," said the Bireouk, "there is no need for losing the hatchet;" and he picked it up.

We set out. I brought up the rear. The rain began again to fall, and very soon there was a soaking shower. It cost us infinite trouble to regain the hut. The Bireouk left the horse in the middle of the yard and shut the gate; he then tied up his dogs, led the prisoner into the house, untied his hands, and set him down in a corner. The little girl, who had fallen asleep near the fire, started out of her sleep, and stared at us in silent terror. I took a seat on the bench.

"Ha! what a terrible change!" said the Bireouk; "you must wait. Would you not like to lie down a little?"

"Thank you."

"I shall shut him up in the garret out of your sight," pointing to the peasant, "but——"

"Leave him there, don't touch him."

The peasant looked at me from beneath his brows. I resolved to do all I could to release the poor wretch. He remained perfectly still. By the light of the lantern I could notice his pale withered face, his yellow hanging eyebrows, his restless look, his spare limbs. The girl lay down on the floor not far from the man. The Bireouk seated himself at the table, his head between his hands. A cricket chirped in a corner, the rain beat heavily on the roof, and the light of the dawning day was falling into the room; we all sat silent.

"Foma Kouzmitch!" said the peasant in a hollow and broken voice, "Foma Kouzmitch!"

"What?"

"Let me go." (No answer.) "Let me go—hunger, you know, hunger—let me go!"

"I know you," answered the Bireouk roughly; "what will you do when you are free? Steal, steal, nothing but steal."

"Let me go," repeated the peasant; "you know, ah! the overseer—ruined—lost—ah! let me go."

"Ruined! nobody has a right to steal."

"Let me go, Foma Kouzmitch, don't kill us—your—ah! we are dying—ah! ah!"

The Bireouk turned away. The peasant shivered, writhed as if he had a severe attack of fever, his head shook, and his breathing was difficult.

"Let me go," he repeated with a stupid despair;

"for God's sake release me—I shall pray, yes, hunger, you know—ah! dying of hunger! I swear to God, hunger, my children crying for food—it is hard—to die in that way—you don't know—you——"

"Don't steal—never steal, I tell you."

"My horse," continued the peasant, "my horse—I have only that in the world—ah! think—Foma—let me go!"

"I tell you I won't; I cannot; I am a serf like yourself; I am answerable for you; the tree has been felled. I hope they won't ruin you for it—though."

"Let me go; want, Foma Kouzmitch, want, hunger—ah!—let me go."

"I know you."

"Ah! release me!"

"Am I bound to listen to you, and answer you? Hold your tongue; if you don't, you know I never joke. Don't you see that there is a bârin here?"

The poor fellow let his head sink on his breast. The Bireouk yawned, crossed his hands on the table, and laid his head on them.

The rain continued to fall, and I still waited. Suddenly the peasant raised himself up; his eyes glowed fiercely; his colour had returned. "Very well! oppress—strangle—choke me—good!" he vociferated with trembling lips, "good! hangman, wolf, take my life, take it"—(the forester half raised his head.) "Well! come, Asiatic,* blood-thirsty wretch, I call you—"

"Are you drunk that you insult me in that way?" said the forester astonished; "have you lost your senses?"

"Drunk! I have been drinking at your cost I suppose? Drunk! ah! blood-thirsty, ah! ravening beast, blood-drinker!"

* A great insult among the Russians

"Ah! you want me to rise, do you?"

"Well, what of it? It is the same to me—if I must die—you will take away my horse I know; and without my horse, I am ruined. Come, strike me, put an end to me, it is but dying—of hunger or blows, it is the same—let us all perish, wife, children—I, I first. But you, you, you—ah! you will have to answer for this."

"The Bireouk rose. I watched him attentively."

"Strike me! strangle me!" repeated the peasant in a tone of the deepest despair, "strike me, strike me, come, strike me!"

The little girl started up and stared at the wretch with a wild wandering look.

"Be silent!" cried the terrible voice of the forester, advancing towards him.

"Come, come, Foma," cried I to the keeper, "let him alone; don't strike him, he will be silent."

"I shall not hold my tongue; let me burst—Ah! ferocious beast! wolf!—and you think you will come off safe, you? Wait a little, it will not be long—you will be strangled, just wait—soon—soon."

The Bireouk seized the peasant violently by the shoulders. I rushed to help the poor fellow. "Don't stir!" cried the forester to me. I would not have cared for his threats, for I had resolved to save him at any risk; but, to my great astonishment, in a moment, he had twisted his belt round the wrists of the man, knocked his cap over his eyes, opened the door, and thrust him by the shoulders out of the house.

"To the devil with you and your horse!" he cried to him, "but don't fall another time into my hands."

He came back into the room, and went up to look at the two children.

"Excellent! Bireouk," I ended by saying to him,

" you have astonished and delighted me. I see that you are a fine fellow."

" No more of that, bârin!" he said in a tone of deep sadness—" only be good enough to say nothing about it. The best thing I can do for you is to go along with you; you won't have patience to wait till the rain is over."

We heard the rumbling of the cart wheels, and the creaking of the gate. " There, he is gone," murmured Foma, " he had better not return."

Half an hour after, the Bireouk bade me adieu at the edge of the forest.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWO VILLAGE LORDS.

I HAVE already had the honour, my dear readers, to present to you several of my neighbours. I will now ask permission to recommend to your special attention two gentlemen proprietors. I visit *them* sometimes, but their *covers* oftener; they are in all respects very worthy men, very upright, and enjoy universal respect throughout several surrounding districts.

I shall endeavour faithfully to describe to you the major-general on half pay, Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch Khvalinski. Be so good as figure to yourselves a man of high stature, who has once upon a time not been wanting in elegance and grace, though he is now, it must be confessed, slightly altered; still he cannot be called frail, or even old; he is in fact a man in the full maturity and vigour of manhood. His features have been regular, and, though changed, are still pleasing; his cheeks, I must admit, are somewhat sunk, and the traitorous crow's-foot is imprinted in the corner of each eye, and a few teeth have disappeared; his fair hair, such as it is, has a decided lilac or violet tint, which it owes to a certain hair-cherishing liquid purchased at the Romena horse-fair, from a Jew who gave himself out for an Armenian. But Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch has a firm step and a hearty laugh; it is a pleasure to hear

his spurs jingle, to see him manipulate his moustache, and finally to hear him call himself an "old cavalier;" whereas men really old, as everybody knows, are not fond of employing the word so freely. He wears habitually a frock-coat buttoned to the chin, and a high cravat, out of which rises a stiff collar; his trousers are gray, with ever so little of a military cut, and he wears his hat horizontally, with a slightly swaggering air. At bottom he is a very good man, but he has notions and habits strange enough; for instance, it is an impossibility with him to treat nobles without money or office as of equal worth with himself. If he speaks to them, he looks askance, leaning one of his cheeks against his stiffly starched collar; or looking right in their faces, he contemplates them with a fixed, silent stare, makes all the skin of his face run up in wrinkles to the roots of his hair, and when speaking, abridges his words, pronouncing them in a way quite different from his ordinary manner, and seemingly with a special love of disfiguring proper names. With people belonging to the inferior ranks of society, he conducts himself still more cavalierly; he does not look at them at all, and, without telling them what he wants, or indeed giving them any order at all, he says several times in a pre-occupied, distracted, and ennuied tone, "What is your name? eh! What the deuce is your name?" laying particular stress on the first word and chewing all the rest, giving his voice a certain resemblance to the cry of a quail.

He is a great maker of difficulties, a troublesome converser, if ever there was one, and a bad administrator of his fortune; he took for steward a native of Little Russia, who, wonderful to say, turned out a blockhead. But, in point of rural economy, no one in all the province is equal to the great Petersburg func-

tionary, who, observing from the reports of his overseer, that his granaries were frequently burnt down, and a deal of grain consequently destroyed, sent a most severe written order, that in future no one should dare to put a single sheaf into his granaries till the fire was quite extinguished.

This same high dignitary, to relieve himself from the fear of losing his sheaves by fire, fell upon a novel idea. He ordered all his fields to be sown with poppy seed; poppy seed sells at a higher price per bushel than rye or other grain, it must, therefore, he reasoned, be more profitable to sow poppy than the ordinary cereals. A friend of good taste and elegance, like every noble inhabitant of a capital, he ordered all the *babas* under his sway to wear their *Kakochnik** made after a pattern sent from St. Petersburg; and, in fact, ever since, the women on his property wear *Kakochniks* very much reduced in size, and placed lightly on the top of the *Kika*.† But let us return to our general Khvalinski.

Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch is a devoted admirer of the fair sex, and no sooner does he perceive, either on his own lands, or in the street of the district town, a pretty well dressed girl, than he immediately follows her.

He loves cards, but he seldom plays except with people of inferior rank, who say to him every minute, "Your Excellency;"‡ and whom he can rail at to his heart's content. If, however, he happens to form one of a card

* The national female head-dress in the shape of a reversed horse-shoe.

† A ribbon for tying up the hair, which serves as an ornament when they go out without the Kakochnik. It is not worn by unmarried women.

‡ A title never accorded to major-generals.

party with the governor or some other great functionary, it works a prodigious change upon him; he smiles right and left; and his supreme amenity is proof even against another test—he loses, and still he smiles, and utters no complaint. Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch reads little; when he does, his moustaches and eyebrows are continually rising, and one would think that a flood was working its way over his face, from his chin upwards to the crown of his head. It is remarkable that these fleshy folds—the outward indication with him of intense thought—are most frequently seen when he reads the *Journal des Debats* (before his visitors, that is to say.)

At election time, he plays a pretty important part; but refuses obstinately, from a spirit of niggardliness, to perform the purely honorary functions of marshal of the nobility. "Gentlemen," he usually says to the noble electors who come to sound him on this subject, and with what abruptness, with what a superb air of superiority he says it—"Gentlemen, I am sensible of the honour which you do me; but I have vowed to devote to solitude every moment of my leisure." After saying these words, he moves his head gently from left to right, and then with great dignity plunges his chin and cheeks into the depths of his cravat.

In his youth he had been attached as aide-de-camp to a very high personage, whom he names only by his baptismal name, followed by the baptismal name of his father. Some say that he had certain other duties to perform under his general not so dignified as those of aide-de-camp; but we must not listen, much less give credit to malicious reports. All that I will say is, that Khvalinski wisely abstains from talking of his period of service and his campaigns; it is strange, certainly, but so it is, and I quite approve of it. He has never

made a campaign, and his maiden sword is unstained with human blood.

The General Khvalinski inhabits a small house, is a stranger to the charms of a conjugal life, and passes at present, in our vicinity, for a *partie*— and a very good *partie* too. The reader will not be surprised to hear that he keeps a highly meritorious housekeeper of some thirty-five years, who is distinguished by a dark eye, *embonpoint*, freshness of countenance, and moustaches of a somewhat virile description. On week days she wears a closely fitting starched dress—on Sundays she adds muslin sleeves.

The occasion on which Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch appears most delightful, is at the dinners of ceremony given by the country gentlemen in honour of the governors or other powers of the day; there, he is, one may say, quite in his element. He is seated on those occasions, if not immediately on the right of the first magistrate, at least at a short distance from this personage. During the first course he maintains very carefully an intense feeling of his own dignity, and throwing his head well back, casts an oblique look along the backs of the heads and the embroidered collars of the company. At the close of the banquet, on the contrary, he grows merry, begins to smile on all sides of him, (at the beginning of the repast he smiled only on the Governor's side) and sometimes even forgets his dignity so far as to propose his favourite toast, "The fair sex, the ornament of our planet!"

General Khvalinski, however, makes a very good figure at all public ceremonies, trials, assemblies of the nobility, and things of this kind. In the passages and doorways, in all those places where one has to endure the ennui of waiting to be "taken up," the

servants of the General never make violent gesticulations, or utter loud shouts. On the contrary, when driving away the crowd and calling the carriage, they speak in an agreeable guttural barytone, "Allow, pray allow—be so good as to permit the General Khvalinski to pass;" or, "General Khvalinski's carriage is at the door."

The carriage! To speak the truth, Khvalinski's vehicle is of a somewhat superannuated form; the livery of his attendants is far from being new (it is unnecessary, I suppose, to add, that it is of gray cloth with red lace-edging), the horses are old and broken; but Viatcheslaff Illarionovitch, we must remember, does not make the least pretension to the vanities of aristocratic display; and, moreover, he is of a rank in which a man, if he has self-respect, does not need to throw dust in anybody's eyes.

Khvalinski is not an orator, or at any rate, circumstances have not yet arisen favourable to the display of his talent for speaking; he permits neither discussion nor reply; he avoids all lengthened conversation, especially with young men. Indeed, it is by far the safest way; for what can you make of the new generation—with these young fellows ready to leap, on a moment's notice, beyond the bounds of propriety and decorum?

With big wigs Khvalinski is for the most part silent; with inferiors he makes no secret of his contempt; he does not break with them altogether, but he uses a brusque and abrupt mode of speech in addressing them—commencing with such forms as the following:—"Come, come, my dear sir, you are talking nonsense;" or, "I find myself compelled, my dear sir, to remark to you . . ." or, "You ought to know to whom you speak," and so on.

He is avoided most of all by postmasters, judges, and inspectors of relay-houses. He receives no one in his own house, and lives, they say, like a stingy fellow. All this, however, does not prevent his being a very good provincial gentleman, a brave soldier, a man who disinterestedly represents the type of the "old grumbler." At least so say all his neighbours. There is scarcely any one, save the government attorney, who permits himself to smile when anybody speaks in his presence of the distinguished and solid qualities of Khvalinski: but, you know,—— envy.

I think I have said enough to enable you to form a correct idea of my honourable neighbour on my right. Let us pass now, if you please, to the honourable gentleman on my left.

Mardari Apollonovitch Stegounoff does not in the least resemble Khvalinski. Heaven knows whether he has ever been in service, or could ever have been considered a handsome man. Mardari Apollonovitch is a little old man, quite round, quite bald, double-chinned, with small flabby hands, and a considerable paunch. He is a free liver, and a merry fellow; he lives according to his fancy, and, as people say, loves his ease; in summer, as well as in autumn, he may be always seen in a striped dressing-gown, lined with wadding covered with silk. There is only one thing in common between him and General Khvalinski—he is a bachelor. He possesses five hundred souls.

Mardari Apollonovitch manages his property in a summary way. Ten years ago, for example, not to be behind the age, he purchased at Moscow a thrashing machine; he shut it up in a coach-house, and never thought of it again. At times, on a fine summer's day, he orders out his beegovaïadrochka, and goes to look at his fields in anticipation of

coming harvest, and to . . . gather bluebottles. Mardari Apollonovitch lives in the good old way, and the architecture of his house is of a similar character. In his anteroom one is at once overwhelmed by the odours of kvass, tallow candles, and leather boots. One of the corners is ornamented with a pyramid of pipes, and other smoking luxuries. In the dining-room are the portraits of the family, flies, a huge geranium-pot, and a squeaking spinet . . . in the drawing-room are three divans, three tables, two mirrors, and a clock with an old enamelled dial-plate and hands of carved bronze; the study contains a cabinet full of papers, a screen of a blue ground, adorned with prints cut out of books of the last century—two presses full of worm-eaten volumes, spiders, and thick layers of a blackish dust, and a well-stuffed arm-chair; this room is lighted by a Venetian window, and by four panes of a door window, now closed up, which was originally intended to open upon the garden. In short, nothing is wanting.

Mardari Apollonovitch keeps in his service a great number of people, all dressed in the old fashion, in long blue coats with high collars, trousers of an undecided colour and barely descending to the ankle, yellow waistcoats, and finally, cravats of a white corded material. These fine fellows say "father," instead of "sir,"* to visitors. M. Stegounoff has a bourmister or bailiff, chosen from among his peasants, to look after the management of his estate—a man whose beard terminates where his toulup does, at his knees. His domestic economy is intrusted to an old woman, who wears, instead of a cap, a silk handkerchief firmly tied over her head in a theatrical fashion; nothing wrinkled and disagreeable could equal

* *Bateouchka* instead of *Soûd'r* for *Soudar*.

her. In the stables of Mardari Apollonovitch are kept thirty horses of various kinds. The master makes use of a calash hammered rudely up by his own joiners, and adorned by his own house-painters; it certainly weighs a good many tons.

M. Stegounoff receives his visitors with a loud welcome and warm salutations, and regales them very cordially—too cordially; thanks to the amazing qualities of Russian cookery, he at once deprives his guests of all power of doing anything else for the whole evening but play at preference. He never occupies himself with anything, morning or evening, and has even given up the custom of reading his *sonnik*.* As we can still count in our dear Russia a great number of lords of the soil cut after this pattern, I ought, it seems to me, to anticipate being asked with what object I have sat down to describe a Mardari Apollonovitch. Well, the fact is, I am dying with desire to give an account of a visit which I made to him not long ago.

It was summer, and I arrived at seven o'clock in the evening, when vespers were ringing. He entered, accompanied by the priest, a very timid young man, who had left his college benches only a few months before. I found this ecclesiastic seated near the drawing-room door on the corner of a chair. Mardari Apollonovitch gave me as usual a most warm reception; he is truly a very good, very cordial man, to visit whom is a real pleasure—a man without dissimulation. The priest rose and looked at me.

"A moment, a moment," said Mardari Apollonovitch to the young man, without letting go my hand, "do not go yet, I have ordered a glass of brandy for you."

* Dream-interpreter.

"I never drink," muttered the young ecclesiastic, much troubled, and blushing up to the ears.

"What a good joke! come, come," replied Mardari Apollonovitch. "Hallo! Michka! Eouchka! a glass of brandy, and quickly, to the good father."

Eouchka, a large and meagre septuagenarian, quickly entered, carrying a glass of brandy on a plate, on which, I thought, I distinguished a picture of nymphs bathing, a painting of which there remained entire only some parts excessively plump and fleshy.

The priest insisted on refusing the liquor.

"Drink, father, drink; come, no wry faces in my house; it is not allowed," said the gentleman in a tone of gentle and earnest reproof.

The poor young man obeyed.

"Well, now you may go, father."

The ecclesiastic thanked him for his goodness by several shy bows.

"Good, good, go. A fine fellow, I assure you," said Mardari Apollonovitch, following the youth with his eye as he withdrew; "I am very well pleased with him, only rather young yet. Ah! my dear neighbour, you . . . you . . . how goes it with you? Let us step out on the balcony—ah! what a fine evening!"

The evening was certainly as beautiful as one could conceive. Tea was served.

"Tell me, pray, Mardari Apollonovitch, about those huts down there upon the road, at a distance from the rest; do they belong to you?"

"Yes, what about them?"

"To you, seriously? Well, Mardari Apollonovitch, I would not have supposed it. It is a sin lying upon your conscience. Narrow huts, wretched, detestable, not a tree round them, nor a bush, not even

a duck-pond! Wells! yes, one, but in a deplorable state. Could you find no other site? A sportsman too informed me that certain old hemp-fields have been taken from these poor creatures, which were their only resource."

"And what would you have one do with that register of lands? Ah! that register! It is a bugbear. I foresee no good which can come out of that famous register. If I have taken away hemp-fields, if I have not dug ponds, these are, in short, these are, are they not, things, which I know very well myself? I am, you see, sir, a simple man—a man of another time; what my forefathers did, I do. A lord is a lord, and a peasant is a peasant—that is the principle I go upon."

No reply certainly could be given to arguments so clear and convincing.

"And then," he resumed, "in the place to which you refer, there are none but bad peasants—peasants under a ban. There are two families there especially, whom my late father did not like, and could not endure.—I have not forgotten that; and I have, you see, always observed this, that if the father is a thief the son is a thief too. Think what you please of it. Blood, oh! blood, is everything!"... The wind had quite fallen. From time to time there passed a gentle breeze; one of these feeble currents, as it breathed its last against the house-wall, bore to our ears the sound of measured strokes, proceeding from the stables or coach-house on our right. Mardari Apollonovitch carried his full cup to his lips, and had already enlarged his nostrils (an operation without which no true and genuine Russian can enjoy his tea), when he suddenly stopt short, listened, shook his head, sipped about a teaspoonful, and, replacing the cup upon the table, uttered with a smile of great

good nature, and as if involuntarily accompanying with his voice the sounds which reached us—"Tcheouki! tcheouki! tcheouki! tcheouki! tcheouk!"

"What is that?" I asked with surprise.

"Nothing—only a fellow whom I ordered to be whipt; Vacia, my butler, you know him?"

"Vacia, do you say?"

"Yes, Vacia, the servant who at dinner the day before yesterday, served us with wine. That large fellow, you recollect, with enormous whiskers, veritable brushes. Ah! you know him now?"

The soft, sweet, and natural expression of Mardari Apollonovitch would have been proof against the profoundest indignation. I abstained from shewing my feelings either by gesture or speech; but the expression of my eye, as I turned it upon his self-complacent face, had evidently made him think that his act was not approved of, for he added almost immediately—

"What of that, young man? What of it?" he said, jocularly shaking his head. "I am a great villain—oh yes! just to see the look you gave me! Don't you know the saying, 'He who loves well, chastises well?' That principle is not of yesterday."

Quarter of an hour after this conversation, I took leave of Mardari Apollonovitch. In passing through the village, I met Vacia, the butler, the man with the great whiskers. He was lounging along the path, and cracking nuts as he went. I stopped my calash and addressed him.

"How comes this, friend? You have been whipt to-day?"

"How do you know that?"

"Your master told me."

"My master himself?"

"Yes—why did he order you to be punished?"

"There was a reason, sir, certainly. *With us*, one is never beaten without cause—no, no, no; *with us*, nothing of the sort; no, no; *with us*, the bârin is not a person of that kind; *with us*, he is a bârin, ho! ho! such a bârin . . . no, no; he has not his equal in the whole province—come."

"Drive on!" I said to my coachman.

This is indeed "old Russia," I thought, as I re-entered my house.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEBEDIANA, OR THE SMALL RUSSIAN TOWN.

One of the principal attractions of sporting is, that you are perpetually passing from one spot to another, and for an idle man this locomotion is excessively agreeable. One must confess, at the same time, that in wet weather it is not very pleasant to lose your way among cross-roads, and wandering where chance or Providence leads you, to be ever and anon stopping the passing peasant with the question; "Hallo, my friend, which is the road to Mordovka?" And when you have reached Mordovka, to have to ask some stupid *baba* (the men being all in the fields) if it is far to some inn of the main highway, and what is the most direct road to it; and after you have travelled ten versts more, with tired-out horses, to find yourself not before an inn, but in some wretched seignorial village of the name of Khoudoboulnoff, to the great astonishment of a whole herd of pigs tumbling about in the middle of the street, plunged, for the most part, up to the ears in a black mud, and never conceiving it possible that any living creature should come to disturb them in the delicious bath in which they are revelling at their ease. It is no longer amusing to be nearly jolted over tottering bridges, to execute a descent down deep ravines, to have to ford some wide-spreading

marshy stream; nothing is less delightful than to roll, day after day, over the green sea of some of our high roads, and stick in the mud (Heaven preserve you from it) for several hours in front of a post-house, with a sign-post either enigmatical or meaningless; it is not very whetting to the appetite to live on nothing but eggs, milk, and our famous bran bread. But all these little disagreeables are compensated by undeniable advantages and pleasures. Let us hasten, however, to our more immediate subject.

After what I have said, it would be superfluous to explain to the reader how it was that, five years ago, I found myself in Lebediana just at the time of the great horse-fair. A sportsman, everybody knows, may, any fine morning, pass the limit of his property with the firm resolve to be at home on the following evening, and yet, obliviously marching on, shooting here the quail, and there the woodcock, find himself, in the end, contemplating his face in the mirror of some pool of the Petchora; and what is quite as well known, every lover of the field, the double-barrelled gun and the game-bag, is, at the same time, a passionate admirer of the horse, the noblest animal in creation. I came then almost accidentally to Lebediana. Immediately on my arrival I hastened to secure a room in the inn, to dress myself like a citizen, and to find my way to the scene of the fair. A waiter, a long lean fellow about twenty, with a nasal-tenor voice, had already, while undressing me, and pouring water over my hands, informed me, shutting his eyes with respect, that his "Illustrious Excellency the Prince N. N. N." (who had come to provide fresh horses for the horse-carabineers) occupied Number One; that many other gentlemen and noblemen had arrived in Lebediana; that in the evening there would be Bohemian songs, and

that *Pan Tverdovski* (a Russian comedy) would be acted at the theatre; that, finally, the horses had brought good prices, and that the best of them were sold.

I reached the field in which the fair was going on, there I saw ever so many interminable rows of carts, and behind the carts horses of all possible kinds; riding, carriage, racing, field, and cart horses. Several, well fed and carefully groomed, were distributed according to their shades of colour, covered with speckled horse cloths, and attached to the cross beams of the kibitkas, timidly lowering their hind quarters under the shadow of the whip, which their masters the jockeys swung over them. The gentlemen's riding horses sent by the rich proprietors who lived within a circle of one or two hundred miles, under the care of an old coachman and two or three sturdy stable boys, shook their long chests, stamped their feet, and bit the backs of the cars with ennui. The Viatka mares, with their ash-coloured hides, stood close together; the broad buttocked trotting horses, with their wavy tails, hairy fetlocks, and dapple-grey, black, or sorrel skin, stood immovable, like lions in bronze, at equal distances, about a foot apart from each other. It was before these last that amateurs paused with respectful admiration.

In the midst of a motley multitude in the streets and lanes formed by the carts, groups of men of all ages, and of every rank and aspect, were receiving continual accessions to their numbers; there were jockeys in blue cafetans and high caps who examined the goers and comers, and kept a sharp eye on the purchasers; gipsies, with eyes bloodshot or streaked with bile, and with their black curly hair, crossing each other in every direction, springing about like

burnt cats, looking into horses' mouths, and lifting their feet and tails; they shouted and railed, played at games of hazard, and showed off their horses round some cavalry commissary, who wore a cap with a blue, or yellow, or red border, and a soldier's cloak with a beaver collar. A huge Cossack passed us on a meagre gelding with the chest of a stag, which he sold, saddle, bridle, and all. There were peasants in toulups torn at the armpits, who laboured despairingly to work their way through the dense crowd, and a dozen boys leaping into a cart, drawn by a horse which seemed to have a great desire to run away; men, who in a place a little apart, haggled to the limits of patience, came to an agreement a hundred times, and then found that each held to their original price; and the matter of all their squabbling, a miserable hack, covered with shrivelled matting, all in tatters, stood dejectedly by winking in a heedless way, as if it had no concern with all that was going on around it; what mattered it, indeed, to the poor brute by whom it was beaten?

In another part of the field were lords of the soil, with high brow and dyed moustache, and mighty airs of dignity, dressed in camlet *tchouyekas*, with an arm passed through one sleeve, and the other free, conversing with big-bellied merchants in down caps and green gloves. Cavalry officers of various regiments met here; a very tall cuirassier, a native of our German provinces, with an admirable sangfroid, asked a lame, miserable jockey, what price he wished for a chestnut which he pointed out with a movement of his chin; a fair-haired hussar, of not more than twenty, interested himself deeply in a horse which he wished to match with his meagre Spanish genet, and drive in tandem. A car driver, with a very low hat adorned with a peacock's

feather, dressed in a russet cafetan, and with leather gloves, which he seemed to prefer to wear in his narrow green belt, was in quest of a good hack. The coachmen were engaged in artistically tying up their horses' tails, moistening their manes with saliva, and giving their masters respectful advices.

Elsewhere the groups were more detached; some, for example, who had just concluded a bargain, and who hastened to drink in the hotel or the tavern, according to their rank. It was altogether an infernal hurly-burly of motion, shouting, growling, gesticulations, pacifying, cursing, laughing, boasting, and running about up to the knees in mud. I made my way with difficulty into this crowd; I wished to purchase three good little ponies for my britzka, as those which I possessed were growing old. I found two horses, good pairs, but it was quite impossible to find a third to match them.*

After a dinner which I shall not undertake to describe to you (considering how much it cost poor Æneas to recall to mind a past sorrow), I betook myself to the place which is boldly named the café, the grand resort of cavalry commissaries, proprietors or managers of studs, and other people of importance. In the billiard-room, quite darkened by thick volumes of tobacco smoke, there were assembled about a score of people. There were young provincial nobles in Brandenburg frock-coats, grey pantaloons, and little well oiled moustaches, looking about them with a proud and bold look; others, in short greatcoats, were making a fearful noise. In a corner four merchants, as close as herrings in a cask, made a group by themselves; officers were conversing freely, but only with one another. The players were the Prince N. N. N., a young man of twenty, with an open face

* It is customary in Russia to drive three horses—a troïka.

in which appeared a slightly supercilious look, dressed in a loose frock-coat, red silk shirt and large black velvet trousers, and Victor Khlopakoff, ex-sub-lieutenant.

This ex-officer Victor Khlopakoff—a little man, dark, thin, of about thirty, with black hair, black eyes, nose flat and slightly twisted—is in the habit of frequenting fairs and elections of the magistrates who are not nominated by the Ministers of the Interior and of Justice. He skips when walking, rounds his arms like the handle of a pot, doubling his fists upon his haunches, wears his cap upon one ear, turns up the facings of the wrist of his military surtout, which is lined with a calico subject to changes of colour. M. Khlopakoff has the talent of mingling very rapidly with all the rich, hair-brained, young metropolitans (from St. Petersburg), who happen to visit our part of the country; he drinks and smokes with them, makes one of their set, and addresses them quite familiarly. How it comes that they allow him such liberties, is a great mystery. He has no wit; he is not even amusing; as a merry fellow he is quite useless. It is true that these young men treat him as a good fellow, in reality quite beneath them, but with whom the familiarity of a day is a matter of no consequence. You may see some of them going arm-in-arm with him for two or three weeks together; then all of a sudden they no longer know him, no longer even give him a passing salutation, and he, on his part, knows how to look as if he did not perceive them . . . There was no kind of attraction which I could see about him, unless it be that young men consider it evidence of great talent to smoke a hundred pipes of Joukoff tobacco in a day, and find something humorous in a trick, at billiards, of raising the left leg higher than his head in taking aim, and of rubbing his left hand for

two minutes before striking his billiard ball . . . but it must be agreed that everybody is not alive to these great merits. He is, certainly, to give him his due, a hard drinker; but this is no rare accomplishment in Russia. In short, the basis of M. Khlopakoff's success is to me quite problematical. I do not deny the success itself; on the contrary, I affirm it; it is the cause of it which I am at a loss to see. All I can do is to suppose that this gentleman is extremely circumspect in all his doings, that he takes care never to allow himself liberties with any one, and that he is never betrayed into saying a sharp or ill-natured word either to or concerning those who condescend to associate with him.

Two days after I left Lebediana. I had occasion to revisit it three weeks after, on my route to another part of the country, and put up at my old quarters for a few hours. After dinner I strolled to the café, and recognised almost all the old faces; and, what surprised me most, I found the Prince N. N. N. still displaying at billiards all his natural and acquired graces. But fortune had already turned with M. Khlopakoff; he was supplanted in the good graces of the prince by another favourite, the little fair-haired officer. The poor ex-sub-lieutenant made one last effort in my presence to regain the prince's favour by a stale and heavy witticism; but the prince, instead of smiling, frowned and shrugged his shoulders. M. Khlopakoff hung his head, slunk away into a corner, and began modestly and silently to fill his pipe.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROVINCIAL WOMAN; AND HER NEPHEW THE ARTIST.

Give me your hand, dear reader, and accompany me on a visit to one of my neighbours. The day is fine, the blue sky of the month of May is a beautiful object; the smooth young leaves of the white hazel trees are as brilliant as if they had been newly washed. The large smooth fields are covered with that fine young grass which the sheep love so much to crop; on the right and left, on the long slopes of the hills, the rye-grass is waving, and over its smooth swell glide the shadows of the little flying clouds. In the distance the woods are resplendent with the brilliant light, the ponds glitter, and the villages are bathed in yellow rays. Innumerable larks fly about singing and beating their wings in unison; making their appearance first in one spot, then in another, they rise lightly from the fields, and again are as quickly lost in them. The rooks station themselves on the highway, looking up fixedly at the sun; they move aside to let you pass, or foolishly fly forward ten paces on the edge of the road. On the slopes beyond a ravine a labourer is at his plough, and a piebald foal, with its miserable little tail, dishevelled mane, and long frail legs, runs after its mother, and we may just hear its plaintive neigh. We

enter a birch wood, and a fresh and strong odour fills the air; we reach the gate of an enclosure; the coachman descends, and, while the horses snort and the right wheeler plays with his tail and rubs his jaw against the pole, he opens the creaking gate, and, reseating himself, we roll on.

A village now presents itself, and, after passing five or six farm-yards, we turn to the right, and, descending rapidly, are soon driving along an embankment. Beyond a pond of moderate extent, and behind apple trees and clustering lilacs, an old wooden house is now visible, painted red and possessing two chimneys; we drive along a paling on the left, and pass through a large open carriage-entrance, saluted by the husky barkings of three old worn-out dogs. My groom gallantly salutes a good old housekeeper, who is peeping out of the pantry through a foot-and-a-half window. We draw up before the door, near the verandah of a gloomy little house. It is the abode of Tatiana Borissovna. But there she is herself, saluting us from the window.

"Good morning, good morning, Madame."

Tatiana Borissovna is a woman of about fifty; she has large bluish-gray eyes slightly prominent, a nose inclined to flatness, cherry cheeks, and a double chin. Her face beams with sweetness and goodness. She once had a husband, but so long ago that no one has any recollection of it. She scarcely ever leaves her little property, keeps up but a slight connection with her neighbours, seldom invites them to her house, and likes none but young people. Her father was a poor gentleman, and she consequently received a very imperfect education; in other words, she does not speak French, and has never seen even Moscow, not to speak of St. Petersburg. But, spite of these little defects, she

manages all her affairs in her country life so simply and wisely; she has so large a way of thinking, of feeling, and comprehending things; she is so little accessible to the thousand weaknesses which are generally found in our good provincial ladies—poor things, that, in truth, one cannot help admiring her. Only consider that she lives all the year round within the precincts of her own village and estate, quite isolated, and that she remains a stranger to all the tittle-tattle of the locality; does not rail, slander, take offence, or choke and fret with curiosity—that envy, jealousy, aversion, and restlessness of body and mind, are all unknown to her—only consider this, and grant that she is a marvel.

Every day after eleven o'clock, she is dressed in a gown of iron-grey taffeta, and a white cap with long puce ribbons; she likes to eat, and make others do the same; but she eats moderately, and lets others follow her example. Preserves, fruits, pickled meats, are all entrusted to the housekeeper. With what, then, does she occupy herself, and how does she fill up her day? She reads, perhaps, you will say. No, she does not read; and, to speak the truth, people must think of others than Tatiana Borissovna when they print a book.

In winter, if she is alone, our Tatiana Borissovna sits near a window, and quietly knits a stocking; in summer, she goes and comes in her garden, where she plants and waters flowers, picks the caterpillars from her shrubs, puts props under her bushes, and sprinkles sand over the garden paths; then she can amuse herself for hours with the feathered race in her court-yard, with her kittens and the pigeons, all of which she feeds herself. She occupies herself very little with housekeeping. If unexpectedly any good young neighbour chances to look in, she is then as happy as possible; she esta-

blishes herself upon her divan, regales her visitor with tea, hears all he has to say, sometimes gives him little friendly pats on the cheek, laughs heartily at his sallies, and speaks little herself. Are you annoyed, or the victim of some misfortune? She consoles you with the most sympathising words, and opens up various means of relief, all full of good sense. How many there are who, after confiding to her their family secrets and their private griefs, have found themselves so relieved by unburdening their minds, that they have bathed her hands with their tears. In general, she sits right before her guest, her head leaning lightly on her left hand, looking in his face with so much kindly interest, smiling with such friendly good nature, that one can scarcely keep themselves from saying, "Ah! what an excellent woman you are, Tatiana Borissovna! Come, I will conceal from you nothing that weighs upon my heart!" In her delightful, nice little rooms, one is so pleased with himself and everybody, that he is unwilling to leave them; in this little heaven, the weather is always at "set fair."

Tatiana Borissovna is an admirable woman, whom nobody thinks of admiring, one only rejoices to love her. Her exquisite good sense, her firmness, her independent conduct, her warm sympathy with the miseries and joys of others, and in general, all the qualities which make her what she is were born with her, and have really cost her neither pains nor cultivation. You cannot imagine this woman other than you see her, and it would be quite out of place to compliment her on exercising any power over herself to make herself what she is. She loves, above everything else in the world, to see the games and the joyous sallies of youth; she crosses her arms on such occasions, hangs her head,

half shuts her eyes and smiles; then sighs and says, "Ah! my children, my dear children!" And one dies with desire to run up to her and taking her by her good, plump, little hand, say, "Listen, Tatiana Borissovna, you cannot but know what a worthy creature you are! With all your simplicity and patriarchal ignorance, you are an admirable woman!" The very name of this woman has something tender, amiable, and feeling about it; there is a pleasure in pronouncing it; it is never on the lips of an honest man without his face beaming with an affectionate smile. How often have I said to the passing peasant, "Be good enough to tell me the way to Gratchevka?" "Go to Viazovo, then pass by the house of Tatiana Borissovna, and at Tatiana Borissovna's any one will point out to you the way to Gratchevka." And as he pronounces this name Tatiana Borissovna, the peasant moves his head with a peculiarly complaisant, well-satisfied air.

She has few servants, conforming in this to her circumstances; the house, the laundry, the pantry, and the kitchen, are all under the orders of Agafia, the housekeeper, who was Tatiana's nurse forty years ago, a very mild creature, slightly complaining, and quite toothless. Two maid-servants, of solid structure, and with cheeks as fresh as St. Antony apples, are entirely under her directions. The functions of valet-de-chambre, overseer, and butler, appertain to the septuagenarian Polycarp, a servant with some pretensions to education. The chief feature of his character is a personal hatred of Napoleon, whom he calls only by the contemptuous name of Bonapartichko. A devoted amateur in the breeding of nightingales, Polycarp always has in his room five or six of these birds, which he tends with a maternal assiduity. In spring time, from the month of March, he will sit whole days by their cages, waiting

for their first attempts at song; and when he has heard them, he buries his face in his hands, bursts into tears, and with sobs cries, "Ah! that is sad, that is sad!" Polycarp has an assistant in the person of his grandson Vacia, a boy of twelve, with vivacious eyes and curly hair. Polycarp loves this child to madness, although he is finding fault with him from morning to night; he occupies himself, too, with his education. Here is a specimen of his training:

"Vacia, come, say 'Bonapartichko was a brigand.'"

"What will you give me, grandfather?"

"What will I give you? Nothing at all. What! are you a Russian or not?"

"I am an Amtchanian, grandfather; I was born in Amtchensk."*

"Oh! the little blockhead; in what country is Amtchensk, then, do you think?"

"How should I know?"

"Amtchensk is in Russia, you little fool."

"And what of that? What though it be in Russia?"

"How! what of that, do you say? Our prince, Mikhaïlo Illarionovitch Golenistchëf Koutouzoff Smolenski, with the help of God, chased that Bonapartichko out of Russia. Don't you know the song—

'The famous Bonapartichko,
We led him a pretty dance;
He left his gaiters behind him,
And ran away to France.'

Do you understand now, you little fool, do you understand that the Prince of Smolensk saved your country?"

"Well, what has that to do with me?"

* *Mtsensk* is vulgarly called Amtchensk, and the inhabitants *Amtchans*.

"With you, you wicked little rascal? What! don't you perceive that if the most illustrious Prince Mikhaïlo Illarionovitch had not made Bonapartichko take to his heels, *a moucié* (monsieur) would now be your master, and let you know what he wished you to do with good blows on the nape of your neck. He would come up to you so, and say, 'Bojou (bon jour), va biéen, comment vous portez vous,' and hit you such a blow."

"Ha! then I would plant my fist in his stomach."

"And immediately he would cry 'Bojou, bojou rr, venné issi,' and pound your head."

"And I would take hold of his legs, and trip up his goat-shanks."

"Yes, you are quite right, a Frenchman has legs like a he-goat. But then he would strangle you, don't you see?"

"And I would fight with him to the death; I would call the coachman Mikhee."

"Don't you think that the Frantsouz could easily beat Mikhee?"

"Mikhee! Come, come, grandfather, you don't know how strong Mikhee is."

"Well, and what would you do then to the Frenchman?".

"We'd give it him on the back, on the back, grandfather, on the back; oh! we'd give it him."

"And he would cry, '*Pardônn, pardônn, se vous pleïe.*'"

"And we should say to him, 'no, no, no; none of your *se vous pleïe's*, you mad Frantsouz,' and keep beating him."

"I do love to hear you speak that way, my good little fellow. You are a capital chap. Come then, Yacia, cry 'Bonapartichko brigand!'"

"Will you give me a lump of sugar, then?"

"Ah, you rogue!"

Tatiana Borissovna sees little of the ladies of the province, because she does not know how to entertain them; the monotony of their conversation sets her to sleep; she shakes herself and makes great efforts to keep her eyes open and assume an attentive air, but immediately relapses into slumber. If one must say it, in general she has no particular affection for women. One of her friends, a good and peaceable young man, had a sister, a querulous old maid of thirty-eight, a very good creature at bottom, but scatter-brained, eccentric, and excitable. He had often spoken to his sister about their neighbour. One fine morning our ancient Miss ordered Favourite to be saddled, and betook herself to Tatiana Borissovna's. In her long amazonian costume, her hat on her head, large curls hanging down on her shoulders, she entered the ante-room, and passing the astounded Vacia, who took her for a roussalka, she exploded like a bomb into the drawing-room. Tatiana Borissovna was herself so surprised by this irruption, that though she wished to rise and say something, she could neither stir nor speak.

"Tatiana Borissovna," said in an almost supplicating voice the unknown visitor, "Excuse my boldness. I am the sister of your friend Alexis Nicolaïtch K . . . and he has spoken to me about you so often, and so much, that I have determined to make your acquaintance."

"You do me great honour . . ." said the invaded lady with some hesitation.

The amazon threw her hat on an arm chair, with both hands put her curls behind her ears, sat down beside Tatiana, and began to address her in a tone of reverie and emotion: "Ah, well, here then—yes, here

at last is that good, that pure, that saintly creature! there, I see her at last, that woman at once so simple and yet so profound! How pleased I feel now, oh how happ·! How much, how very much we shall love each other! At last I will live. Yes, there she is, just such a woman as I had imagined to myself." So saying, she devoured Tatiana Borissovna with her eyes. "Assure me that you are not angry with me, my best, my excellent . . ."

"I am highly flattered, very much pleased . . . but . . . may I offer you a cup of tea?"

The amazon gave a smile full of grace, muttered to herself the German words, "*Wie wahr, wie unreflectirt,*" (how genuine and simple!) and then cried with ardour, "Permit, dearest lady, permit me to embrace you!"

The old Miss remained full three hours with Tatiana Borissovna, and during all that time her tongue never ceased to wag for a second. She insisted on explaining to her new acquaintance, Tatiana Borissovna, the value of Tatiana herself.

Immediately after the departure of the young lady, Tatiana felt it absolutely necessary to take a bath by way of refreshment, and then to go to bed, where, instead of dinner, she took three cups of lime-tree infusion, and then sought and enjoyed—thank heaven—a refreshing slumber. But the following morning, the old damsel reappeared, spent, on this occasion, four long mortal hours beside the astounded Tatiana, and when she left, alas! promised to return next day, and every day, to converse with her friend. Because, you see, she had determined to develope and perfect the beautiful, the rich (as she said), but uncultivated nature of her brother's friend; and I have no doubt she would, in a short time, have made Tatiana mad with vexation, had she not been suddenly disenchanted, and

had she not also, before a fortnight had elapsed, fallen desperately in love with a young student, with whom she commenced, from the very first note, an ardent and impassioned correspondence.

After these famous fifteen days of severe suffering, Tatiana Borissovna was more than ever on her guard with respect to the ladies of her neighbourhood. But nothing on earth is stable. Whatever I have narrated to you about the peaceful existence of this excellent country lady, I have endeavoured to make as *present* to you as possible; but, unfortunately, it is all over with her; the sweet peace which reigned in this house has departed, never to return. For a year past, her solitude has been rudely broken, and there dwells under her roof a nephew, an artist from St. Petersburg. I am just going to explain to you how this has come about.

Tatiana Borissovna had taken to live with her a little boy of twelve, of the name of Andreouchka, the son of her late brother. His mother was also dead. He had fine, large, clear eyes, a very small mouth, a regular nose, and a high forehead. His voice was sweet and clear, he was always neat and clean, and quite a model of politeness to all the acquaintances of his aunt, his dear aunt, whose hands he kissed with a respectful affection which it was quite beautiful to see.

Meanwhile, she had not a very great attachment to him; she had, in fact, a grave mistrust of all these caresses, of that conduct so correct and so marvellously attentive. The boy grew; she began to be more and more uneasy about his future. An unexpected and painful occurrence now took place. One day, just eight years ago, she received the visit of a Monsieur Peoter Mikhaïlytch Benevolenski, college councillor and knight. He gave himself out as a lover of the arts—a love which

was in him very disinterested; for to speak the truth, there was no one art in which he was really a connoisseur. When one saw him take a passion for this or that piece of music, or this or that picture, one could not help asking himself, by what mysterious and inexplicable law this passion could have grown up in a man decidedly practical, material, and altogether mediocre . . . However, we have many such men in our beloved Russia. The love which they bear for the arts and artists gives them generally so strange an air, that it is quite painful to see and hear their false enthusiasm, their cold warmth; you are particularly impressed with this by their forced and emphatic way of pronouncing the names of Raphael and Correggio, the divine Sanzio, and the inimitable Allegris.

At breakfast, the day after the arrival of M. Benevolenski, she told her nephew to show his little drawings.

"So! he practises drawing does he?" said M. Benevolenski with some surprise; and he smiled graciously at the child.

"Oh yes, he draws," said Tatiana. "It is his passion, and just imagine, without having had any master or any teaching!"

"Let me see, let me see."

Andreouchka, with the blush of modesty on his brow, presented his drawing book. M. Benevolenski began to turn over the leaves with all the gravity of a refined connoisseur. "Bravo, young man!" he said, "bravo! that is very good, very good." And he passed his hand very gently over Andreouchka's curly head as he spoke. The little fellow took hold of it very prettily, and imprinted on it a tender and respectful kiss.

"Ah! just see what talent is here. I congratulate you, Tatiana Borissovna, and from my heart."

"Thanks, Peoter Mikhaïlytch; but you see I am not

able to give him a master. The master in the neighbouring town asks quite a fabulous price. There is a painter in the house of my neighbours the Antamanoffs, but the lady forbids very strictly his giving any lessons out of her house. She is convinced that he will spoil his taste and hand by coming in contact with a pupil."

"Hum!" replied M. Benevolenski dreamily, and fixing a long look upon Andreouchka. "Ah, well! there is a small matter; we shall speak again about it," he added quickly, and rubbing his hands violently. After dinner he had a particular conversation with Tatiana Borissovna. The doors of the drawing-room were closed, and after the lapse of half an hour, Andreouchka was called. When he entered M. Benevolenski had a slight animation in his features, and his eyes were sparkling. Tatiana Borissovna was seated in a corner wiping her eyes. "My dear little André," she said at last, "thank Peoter Mikhaïlytch; he will take you under his guardianship, and carry you with him to St. Petersburg."

Andreouchka was dumb with astonishment. "My boy, speak out frankly," said M. Benevolenski, in a tone full of dignity and benevolence; "my boy, or rather young man, have you a desire to become an artist? Do you feel a true vocation for the arts?"

"I wish to be an artist, Peoter Mikhaïlytch," said Andreouchka, boiling over with delight.

"Well, I am pleased to hear it. It will grieve you much to leave your excellent and venerable aunt, but I have no doubt you will ever retain the most lively gratitude for her kindness to you."

"I adore my aunt," said Andreouchka, shutting his eyes with an air of compunction.

"No doubt, no doubt, that is quite intelligible, and does you honour, my young friend; but consider, on the

other hand, the joy she will have, in the course of time, to hear of your success."

"Embrace me, Andreouchka," faltered the excellent old lady.

Andreouchka threw himself into his aunt's arms, and then she said to him—"Now, go and thank your benefactor."

Andreouchka embraced the huge paunch of M. Benevolenski, and two days after that scene, they set out together to the capital.

During the first three years of his absence, Andreouchka wrote pretty often, usually adding a few sketches to his letter. M. Benevolenski sometimes added a few words, generally favourable to the youth. Letters, however, became more and more rare, and at last ceased altogether. The nice nephew had not for a whole year given a sign of life to his aunt, and she was beginning to feel serious uneasiness, when she one day received the following note:—

"Dear Aunt—Peoter Mikhaïlytch is no more. Four days ago a dreadful stroke of apoplexy deprived me of my friend and protector. You are aware that I had no other means of subsistence in St. Petersburg. I am now twenty years old; seven years of study have been to me seven years of marked and remarkable progress, I flatter myself. I rely on my talent—I rely on it firmly, as a means of gaining my livelihood. Be assured that I do not feel discouraged; but at the same time, to meet present conjunctures, you may send me two hundred and fifty roubles in bank notes, and you will oblige me.—I remain," &c. &c.

Tatiana Borissovna sent the two hundred and fifty roubles to her nephew. Two months after, he renewed his request. She had great difficulty in procuring the sum; however, she procured it at last and dispatched it.

Three weeks had scarcely elapsed when he returned to the charge; he had to purchase very expensive colours for a portrait of the princess Terterecheneff. Tatiana Borissovna found courage to deny his request this time. "Well, my dear aunt," he replied, "I may inform you that I intend to leave this and spend a few weeks with you in the country, for the re-establishment of my delicate health." And, in point of fact, Andreouchka mad his appearance at Malyia-Bryçi about the middle of May.

Tatiana Borissovna did not at the first glance recognise Andreouchka. After receiving his last letter, she had prepared herself to see a thin, delicate youth, and she had before her a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a large face, and well-oiled curly hair. The small, weakly, pale Andreouchka, had now become the vigorous and athletic André Ivanovitch Beelozoroff. And he was not only changed in his exterior; for the timidity, circumspection, and the attention to neatness of his boyhood, had given place to a negligence intolerable, or rather insolent. He swung to the right and left as he walked, flung the weight of his heavy body into the arm-chairs, amused himself with beating upon the tables as if he would break them to pieces, and throwing himself backward with his whole weight, would kick up the table with his toe, as if he would balance it; spoke brusquely to his aunt, and insolently to the domestics.

"Ah! that is what I am, you see! An artist I, a free Cossack; so are we artists made!"

For many days in succession he never touched his brush, and did not even dream of preparing his palette; then inspiration would come upon him, and, make way! make way! the artist feels an excitement near akin to the intoxication caused by wine from the cellars in November; he is stupid, awkward, noisy. His

cheeks take the colour of bricks, his eyes are of a whity yellow, and he never ceases trumpeting his capacities, his talents, his merits, his progress, his successes. It must be confessed, however, that he has the capacity of painting an oil-portrait pretty-like, and on the whole, presentable. That he does not undertake twenty times more, is a matter of congratulation rather than anything else; the waste of canvas and colours is great enough as it is. His ignorance is something quite unique. He has read nothing, and is of opinion that an artist does not need to read books; in short, nature, liberty, poesy, is not that his element? Ah! how beautifully he can brush up his curly locks and spread them negligently to the winds! Can he not sing in a way to astonish the very nightingales? Does he not inspire the Joukoff tobacco in such a style, that he can send out one puff for an hour together, like a volcano before an eruption? Russian audacity is good in itself, but everybody does not care to hear about it, and adventurers of the second class, the swaggering stage braggadocios, are characters on which the eye does not love to rest. I shall be brief.

André Ivanovitch had a good life of it with his dear aunt; the bread had a sufficiently good flavour, but not so the friends of Tatiana Borissovna. This fantastic young man did not like them. The madcap next betook himself to a harpsichord (the possession of such an instrument he maintained to be indispensable), made many vain efforts to find out with a single finger the air of "Fiery chariot, my delight," and rashly struck at the strings till he broke them all; and then, abandoning the first air, he launched out with head, mouth, arms, legs, into the ballads of Varlamoff, "A solitary aspen tree," or "No, doctor, come not thou to me." He would go on in this fashion for

hours together till his eyes were moist, and the skin of his cheeks stretched and smooth like a drum-head. The worst of it all was, when he shouted with a voice of thunder—

"Leave me, oh, leave me,
Ye passions devouring, ye furies of love!"

Tatiana Borissovna would shrink into nothing, poor lady, and tremble in every limb.

"It is astonishing," she said to me one day, "what songs are composed now-a-days; they are nothing but fury. In my time they were quite different; it was a pleasant thing in my young days to sing or hear singing. Some of the ballads, it is true, were rather sad; but even then one could hear them without being shocked or alarmed; for example—

'Oh! meet me, meet me on the lea,
Where sad and lone I wait for thee;
Oh! take the path by the forest side,
All watered by a briny tide,
The tears of my despair.
Alas! my love, say not to-morrow,
Have pity on thy lover's sorrow.
To-morrow, ah! will be too late;
To-morrow will have sealed my fate;
I die for thee, my fair.'"

And Tatiana Borissovna smiled so sweetly and delicately, when, just at that moment, her nephew bellowed like a bull from the neighbouring room—

"I su—u—u—uffer——I su—u—u—uffer,
All hell doth fi—ill my bosom."

"Stop, stop, Andreouchka, I beseech you."

"Absent, and why? Oh, wherefore absent?
My head doth whirl,—and hell—
All hell doth fill my bo—osom."

Tatiana Borissovna shook her head with vexation. "O these artists! these artists!" she said, and was calm again.

A whole year has passed in this way. Beelozoroff, up to this moment, is with his aunt; but, it is true, always announcing his departure for St. Petersburg on the following day. Meanwhile, he has grown excessively stout in the country. I have a great desire to communicate to my readers a fact which they will scarcely believe; it is always safer to withhold what is deficient in probability; it matters not, I will risk it for once. Know, then, that Tatiana Borissovna, heart and soul, admires her nephew Andreouchka, and that the young ladies round about—yes, I repeat it, the young ladies—are almost all in love with his talents, his manners, the graces of his person, and there is no room for mistaking it—madly in love!

The greater part of Tatiana Borissovna's old acquaintances have ceased to visit her.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW A RUSSIAN DIES.

I HAVE a neighbour—a young man, who is fond of shooting. On a beautiful July morning I rode to his house, and proposed a shooting excursion. He consented. "Only," said he, "let us go to Zoucha, and I can then see to some improvements that are going on in that direction, and have a look at my oak forest, Tchaplyghino: I have given orders to have it all cut down. Is this agreeable to you?" He ordered his horse to be saddled, dressed himself in a green coat, adorned with brass buttons representing boars' heads, and slinging across his shoulders a game bag embroidered with threads of camel's hair, and a silver flask, he shouldered a brand-new French gun, and taking a few glances in the mirror, called his dog, the handsome *Esperance*, the gift of an old damsel of his acquaintance—a woman endowed with an excellent heart, although her head was destitute of hair.

So equipped, we set out. My neighbour took with him his deciatski, Arkhipp, a large good-natured man, with a square face and prominent cheek-bones, and a steward quite recently imported from Courland or Livonia, a young man of nineteen, thin, fair, short-sighted, with low, sloping shoulders, long neck, and afflicted with the name of Gottlieb von der Kock.

My young neighbour had been only a short time in possession of his fortune, having succeeded to it after the death of his aunt Kardon-Kartaëff, a fat woman—fearfully fat, who, even in repose, when stretched out in bed, laboured painfully under her own obesity.

Arrived at the spot where the work of cutting was going on, we entered the underwood. "Wait for me on this little meadow," said Ardalion Mikhaïlovitch (my neighbour) to his attendants. The German bent forward, dismounted, took from his pocket a little stitched book, which was, I believe, a romance by Johann Schopenhauer, and seated himself under the shade of a wild willow. Arkhipp stood in the full blaze of the sun, and kept that position for a whole hour. We crossed and recrossed the coppice-wood in every direction, but could not find the slightest trace of cart wheels. Ardalion Mikhaïlovitch expressed a desire to enter the oak forest.

"Good!" I said; "I will accompany you, and all the more willingly that I do not expect to kill much to-day."

We regained the meadow where we had left our attendants. The German put two or three blades of grass in his book, to mark the place where he had been interrupted; and remounting, not without difficulty, his detestable horse, which snuffled—by way of neighing, and insisted on always flinging out its heels when our cavalier ventured to touch it. Arkhipp shook himself up and down on his beast, drew the bridle on both sides at once, struck his short legs against the animal's flanks, and ended by succeeding in setting the miserable jade in motion, almost crushing it by his enormous weight. We resumed our march.

I had known Ardalion Mikhaïlytch's forest since my childhood. I used frequently to visit Tchaplyghino

with my French tutor M. Desiré Henry, a very excellent man, who, however, nearly ruined my health, by compelling me to swallow nightly doses of the medicine of Leroy. It was a wood consisting of two or three hundred enormous oaks, and a considerable number of gigantic ash trees. Their tall, powerful, and dark-coloured shafts gave a wonderful brightness and transparency to the verdure of the hazel and service trees which grew among them. They towered aloft with their long straight branches against the blue sky, extending them till they interlaced and formed a picturesque tent, pierced here and there to admit the light of day; sparrow-hawks, buzzards, kestrels, fluttered and circled round their motionless tops; the variegated woodpecker transpierced the thick bark of the trunk with all the energy of its iron beak; the re-echoing song of the blackbird sounded among the thick foliage, taking up the warbling trill of the goldfinch; below, among the thick underwood, sang the linnet, the siskin, and the lapwing; the chaffinches hopped nimbly along the ground; the minever glided along the borders of the thicket always cautiously, in a slanting direction; the red squirrels leapt gaily from tree to tree, then would suddenly pause, and, rolling themselves into a heap, would lie down to rest, their tails above their heads. Among the grass, and around the high ant-hills, under the indented shadows of the beautiful fern, bloomed violets, lilies of the valley, intermixed with endless varieties of funguses—white, red, yellow, scarlet, foliated and spongy, wholesome and poisonous. In the glades the ground seemed all bespangled with little scarlet stars—the ripe and finely-flavoured fruit of the wood-strawberry. In this forest what a grand shadow, what a fine gloom even at mid-

day—the air loaded with a delicious aroma—freshness and calm everywhere.

I have spent many a sweet hour at Tchaplyghino. I confess I did not enter this seat of so many moving memories without a feeling of melancholy. The fatal snowless* winter of 1840-41 had not spared my old friends the great oaks and the beautiful ash-trees. Withered—despoiled of their branches—blasted here and there by the intense cold, and disfigured rather than adorned by a sickly verdure—they lay sadly extended among the young trees of a lately planted wood, which endeavoured to succeed, but could not replace them. Some still standing, and boasting of a few leaves round their base, raised, as if in reproach and despair, their mutilated and lifeless arms; the foliage of others was still pretty thick in some parts, but above there stretched large withered branches, black and blasted; several had entirely lost their bark, and, alas! how many lay dead upon the ground, and, haughty giants though they had been, rotted there like vile animal carcasses!

Who could have foreseen in 1840, that, after a few years, one might seek in vain for shade in the forest of Tchaplyghino? As I contemplated these modern Titans, victims of a pitiless climate, I could not help investing them with feeling, and imagining that they suffered the anguish of sorrow and shame . . . and I recalled the apostrophe of the poet Koltsoff:—

"Where now is gone
Thy high command,
Thy haughty strength,
And kingly power?

* Snow is a necessary corrective of the rigour of a Russian climate, both for the sake of conveyance by sledge, and the protection which it affords to the vegetation.

Oh, forest-lord!
Where is the sap
So rich, that rose
To thy verdant tops?..."

"Come, Ardalion Mikhaïlytch," I said to my young neighbour, "explain to me how it happened that all his was not cut down in '41 or '42? You will not now get the tenth of what you might have got then;" (the young man only shrugged his shoulders). "If any good soul had only hinted it to your aunt, merchants would most certainly have hastened, cash in hand, competing for the purchase."

"*Mein Gott! mein Gott!*" shouted Von der Kock at every step. "My God! *quelle piété! quelle piété!*"

"What do you mean by *piété?*" asked my neighbour with a smile.

"*Che feu tire quée c'ée pien bitoyâppe, tout ça!*"

What roused his compassion above everything else was the huge trunks which lay extended on every side, all worm-eaten and useless. He was just the man to have paid high prices for such fine pieces of wood. As for the deciatski Arkhipp, he enjoyed an imperturbable calm; far from lamenting the dead trunks around him, he took a pleasure in leaping over them, bringing cuts of his whip over those parts which were decayed or covered with parasitical mosses.

We were moving towards the spot where the cutting was going on, when all at once we heard the fall of a tree, followed by a loud cry and the noise of several voices, and immediately after there sprang from the thicket a young peasant pale and excited.

"What is the matter? where are you running to?" said the young lord.

"Ah! Sir, ah! Ardalion Mikhaïlytch, what a calamity!"

"What is it?"

"The tree, Sir; the tree has crushed Maxim."

"How! Maxim? the contractor?"

"Yes, Sir; we were cutting an ash; he was standing about five paces off looking at us. After looking at us for a considerable time he felt thirsty, and was just moving aside to a little spring, when all at once the tree cracked, and fell right on the top of him. We cried 'Run, run, run!' He should have sprung to the right or left; but no, he ran straight forward; his terror had confused him; the ash covered him with its branches. Heaven knows how the tree fell so suddenly; it must have been decayed at the heart."

"And Maxim, is he killed?"

"He is killed, Sir."

"I ask, is he dead?"

"He moves still, Sir; but what of that, his legs and arms are broken. I am now running to fetch doctor Selivertych."

Ardalion Mikhaïlytch ordered Arkhipp to gallop as fast as he could to the village and fetch Selivertych, while he himself hastened to the scene of the accident, followed by me.

We found poor Maxim lying on the grass, with ten or twelve peasants round him; we dismounted. He did not utter a groan; from time to time he opened his large eyes. He seemed to be looking about him with surprise; and kept biting his blue lips, while his chin trembled. His hair was matted on his forehead, and his chest heaved with unequal movements—he was dying; the shadow cast by a young lime played gently over his features.

We approached close to him, and he recognised my friend.

"Sir," he said, in a voice scarcely intelligible,

"send for the priest; God has punished me . . my arms and legs are broken . . It is . . Sunday . . and I . . and I . . I, you see . . made these . . good people . . work."

He was silent for want of breath.

"My money," he then added, "what will be over when debts are paid, give to my wife . . to my wife. Onicim here . . knows to whom . . I owe money."

"My poor Maxim, we have sent for the doctor," said the young master to the dying man; "perhaps you will not die."

He made a vain effort to open his mouth, and raised his eyelids with difficulty.

"No," he muttered soon after, "I am dying . . death is here . . brothers . . if I have done you harm . . . pardon!" "May God give you grace, Maxim Andreytch!" said in a low voice all the peasants, uncovering their heads at the same time. "It is you, you who have to pardon us."

He shook his head despairingly; his chest rose and fell with anguish.

"We cannot let him die here," cried Ardalion Mikhailytch; "bring the mats of your cart here, make a couch, and let us convey him to the hospital."

Two men hastened to execute the order.

"Yesterday, I bought," stammered the dying man, ". . . I bought a horse at Efim . . . I gave the earnest money . . . the horse is mine, it is for my wife . . . she will pay . . . give it to my wife."

They slipped him with great care upon the litter; he shivered like a wounded bird, and immediately his body stiffened.

"Dead," muttered the peasants.

We remounted and left them.

The death of poor Maxim made me reflect. The

Russian peasant has a way of dying quite peculiar to him; although one can by no means say that the state of mind which he exhibits before expiring, is that of indifference or stupidity. He dies, and I have invariably observed, dies with calmness and simplicity, and as if he were performing a piece of business—an inevitable and quite natural formality.

Some years ago, in another neighbour's village, a peasant was seriously burnt by a fire which reduced his farm to ashes. He would have remained where he was and died among the ruins, had not a fellow-peasant dragged him out half-dead. I went to see the unfortunate man in his cottage, it was gloomy, the air vitiated, and loaded with smoke.

"Where is the sick man?" I asked.

"There, on the stove-shed!" replied a woman, with the usual sing-song of poor peasants when in distress.

I approach; the unfortunate man was lying there covered with his toulup, and breathing with great difficulty. "Well, my man, how do you feel?" The patient made some motions; he was all covered with sores, at the very point of death, yet he tried to raise himself a little. "Be quiet, do not move . . . Well, how are you, my good man?"

"Very ill, as you see."

"Do you suffer pain?" Silence. "Is there anything you want?" Silence. "A little tea—do you wish tea?"

"Nô."

I withdrew, and sat for half an hour on the bench, in the midst of a silence truly sepulchral. In a corner under the image-bracket, squatted a little girl of five munching a crust. The mother from time to time threatens her with her finger. At the entrance they go and come, and knock, and talk; the sister-in-law is hewing some wood.

"Axinia," said at last the dying man.

"What?"

"Kvass."

Axinia gave him the drink he asked, and there was silence again. "Has he received the sacrament?" I asked in a low tone. "Yes, before you came."

"Come," I said to myself, "everything is in order here, the sick man expects death, he expects it, and nothing else. I can do nothing, I will go."

Apropos of this, I remember one day when out shooting, coming upon the hospital of Krasnogorié, and as I knew a man there called Kapiton—a surgical assistant or physician, I know not which, but a great lover of my favourite pastime—I entered to have a little talk with him. The hospital consisted of the wing of an ancient signorial mansion; it was the lady of the place who had herself set it on foot. She caused a sign-board painted blue to be nailed above the doorway, with the inscription, "Hospital of Krasnogorié," in white letters; and on the same day sent a pretty album to Kapiton, in his capacity of chief nurse, in which he was to inscribe the names of his patients. On the first page of this album, one of the toadies, and "very humble servants" of the beneficent lady, had written the following verses in French—

"Dans ces beaux lieux où règne l'allégresse
Ce temple fut ouvert par la beauté;
De vos seigneurs admirez la tendresse
Bons habitants de Krasnogorié!"

I do not pretend to justify the rhyme or measure of the last line. I have transcribed it as a historian only, and that is all that can be expected from me.

Another friend of the house soon after took the pen in hand, and took it into his head to write also in

French, and in the most beautiful style, with an appropriateness which one does not at once perceive:

"Et moi aussi j'aime la nature." A signature with a flourish follows. "JEAN KOUBILIATNIKOFF."

I cannot say whether the French will find the measure of a verse in this impromptu, which is not deficient in grace at least.

The surgeon, left almost exclusively to his own means of a material kind, as well as to his own medicinal inspirations, purchased with his own money six beds of fir-wood, painted them with green oil-paint, and applied himself, invoking God's blessing, to do his best for the sick poor. Two assistants were appointed; one of them, Paul, had been a sculptor, and was subject very frequently to a singular absence of mind, which made him somewhat troublesome; the other, a woman of the name of Melikitrika, called "Dry-hands," who was charged with the kitchen department. Both of them were employed preparing medicines, drying herbs, making infusions, and so forth; on other occasions they had forcibly to control the fever patients, or those who resisted some painful operation. The sculptor was habitually morose, and sparing of his words; during the night, however, he would sing incessantly—

"Venus, O! all powerful goddess . . . Queen of Beauty!" and so on. He would unexpectedly accost every passer-by, supplicating him to grant him permission to marry a certain Malenia who had been dead and buried for several years. Dry-hands would then beat him—out of pure love, and put him, a little by force, to a calming regimen—making him in fact watch the turkey-cocks.

I was sitting with the surgeon, physician, doctor, hospital director—call him what you will—with my good and honest Kapiton, in short, and we were re-

calling the circumstances of our last shooting expedition, when all at once a telega, drawn by an enormous black horse, such as millers only use, entered the court-yard at full speed. In this curricle sat a vigorous man, with a beard four or five shades of colour, and dressed in a new armiak. "Ah, Vacili Dmitrytch!" cried Kapiton from his window, "you are welcome." "It is the miller of Leoubovchinsk," he added, addressing me, as he drew his head from the window. The peasant descended from his car with a plaintive and prolonged groan, and entering Kapiton's room, looked in the direction of the holy image, and solemnly crossed himself.

"Well, well! Vacili Dmitrytch, what news? How now, are you unwell? You have not at all a good face to-day."

"No, Kapiton Timofeytch; it is true, I do not feel well."

"What has happened?"

"Listen, Kapiton Timofeytch; some days ago I went to town, purchased some millstones, and brought them home. I tried to lift them from the cart, and lay them in the court-yard without assistance; I exerted all my strength, and something, I don't know what, all at once burst within me, or at any rate, went out of order . . . Well, since that accursed moment I have lost my strength entirely, and to-day, I am very much pained."

"Hum," said Kapiton, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and looking intently at the floor—"it must be a rupture. Is it long since that happened?"

"Nine days."

"Nine days!" the old physician opened his large wild eyes, drew in his breath, and shook his head . . . "Let me see it" . . . They disappeared behind a

curtain; and when they came out Kapiton said—"My poor Vacili Dmitrytch, I am really sorry for you; it is a serious accident; you are very ill, and you ought not to leave this; I will devote all my care to you, but I shall not answer for the result."

"Am I then so ill, so very ill?" asked the miller with surprise.

"Yes, Vacili Dmitrytch, very ill; if you had come a couple of days sooner, perhaps I could have relieved you; but now there is inflammation, and heaven grant a gangrene may not ensue."

"Impossible! Kapiton Timofeytch."

"It is as I say."

"How—how? Am I then to die for such a trifle?"

"I do not say that you will die, but I say that you ought not to leave this house."

The peasant reflected, rubbed his brow, looked at the floor, then at us, then at his cap, and, putting it on, rose to go.

"Where are you going, Vacili Dmitrytch?"

"Where am I going? Home, to be sure, since I am so ill. It is necessary to make some arrangements before dying."

"You will kill yourself, Vacili Dmitrytch. I assure you that it astonishes me how you could manage to come here? Remain where you are, I beg you."

"No, my friend; no, Kapiton Timofeytch. If I must die, let it be at home; if I die here, God knows what may happen at home."

"No one can know, Vacili Dmitrytch, how the ma- may turn out . . . no doubt it is dangerous— dangerous; and it is just because it is so that ght to remain here."

" said the miller, shaking his head; "no, Kapi-

ton Timofeytch, I will not remain; but prescribe what I should take."

"Potions will do little good by themselves."

"I tell you that my mind is quite made up to return."

"Well, you are master of your own movements; I tremble lest you should repent when it will be too late."

He tore a leaf out of the beautiful album, wrote some directions on it, and added many others by word of mouth. The peasant took the slip of paper, gave Kapiton half a rouble, left the room, and succeeded in mounting his car with the surgeon's help.

"Well, well, adieu!" said he to the latter. "Remember me affectionately, and look after my family now and then, if anything happens."

"Ah, Vacili, remain, remain here, I beseech you!"

The peasant shook his head, touched his horse with his whip, and left the court-yard. I went into the road and followed him with my eye for some time. The way was muddy and uneven; the miller went along slowly and carefully, guiding his horse skilfully, and at every jolt he drew the rein: he saluted the passers-by as usual. . . . Three days after he was no more.

I say again, that the Russians are admirable in their way of meeting death. A crowd of people whom I have seen dying, rise just now to my memory, corroborative of this statement. I see you again as distinctly as if you were still in life, Avenir Sorokooumoff, my old comrade! You had not yet finished your studies, or gained your first diploma, but you were none the less an excellent fellow, and full of true nobility of soul. I see again your bright face and rosy cheeks, your long fair hair, your modest smile, your look of wonder, your lovely limbs. I hear your gentle and caressing voice. You took up your abode with a grand Russian lo[redacted]

Gour Kroupianikoff, and educated his children, Master Fofa and Miss Zeozia. You bore patiently the heavy wit of M. Gour himself, the sallies of his overseer, and the tricks of your pupils—at times, I fear, a little malicious. You yielded to the fanciful exactions of a mother, who was a victim of the vapours arising from an incurable ennui; you tried to accommodate yourself to her whims, with a smile of bitterness, it might be on your face, but no resentment, no complaint . . . And then, when the hour of relaxation came, in the evening after supper, ah, how you enjoyed it! how happy you felt to be for a short time delivered from all obligation, all constraint, all mental tension! You would sit then at your window, and as you dreamily smoked your pipe, turn over the leaves of some favourite book, or a Russian review, brought from the neighbouring town by the land-surveyor, as poor a devil as yourself. How you drank in every poem, tale, and every piece of news! how easily did the authors of these trifles draw tears from your eyes! with what inner delight you would smile! with what sincere love of humanity, with what noble sympathy for the good and the beautiful, your pure and chaste soul was roused by those fictions, more or less talented, more or less bearing the impress of true sensibility!

The truth must be told, however. You were not distinguished by a very high intellect; nature had not endowed you with a very strong memory; power of application and zeal for knowledge were wanting. At the university you were considered one of the worst students; at lecture you slept, at examinations you preserved a solemn silence . . . But who was it whose eyes sparkled most brightly with joy—who at the success of a comrade, lost his very breath with excitement? It was Avenir. Who had blind faith in the high

vocation of his friends? Who extolled them with ecstasy, and defended them with ardour? Who was entirely a stranger to envy, to hate, and to vanity? Who was ready to sacrifice himself heartily, unreservedly? Who yielded voluntarily to people who were unable to value your heart and fine character aright? Always you,—always you, our good and dear Avenir!

I remember, it was with a breaking heart that you separated from your comrades, to fill a situation in a gentleman's family. Sad presentiments tortured you; and in the country, in your dependent position, you must indeed have had much to endure, for there was no one to whose conversation you could listen with a reverent attention, none whom you could admire or love. All pure Stepniaks,* lords of the soil, who saw in you only a tutor, a man of no importance. Some spoke to you rudely, others little, or not at all. To add to your unhappiness, you wanted confidence; you trembled, blushed, stammered, were deficient in everything which might have enabled you to vindicate your true position. The pure air of the plains had no power to restore your health, and you wasted away like a lighted candle, my poor friend! Your room opened upon the garden; the cherry-trees, the apple-trees, and limes, shed their light flowers on your table, your desk, your books, and papers. On the wall hung a little blue silk case for the watch which, on the day of your departure, had been given you as a souvenir by a good and sensible German governess, with blue eyes and long fair curls. At times you were visited by some old Moscow friend, who would throw you into a state of rapture by reading you poems, some of which were his own composition; but habitual isolation, and the insupportable

* Stepniaks, people living on the steppes, and away from the society of large towns.

servitude of a tutor's condition, with the impossibility of ever rising above it, the interminable nine-months' winter, beginning and ending in mud, a chronic disease . . . Poor, poor Avehir!

I presented myself to M. Gour Kroupianikoff, without concealing that my only purpose in visiting him was to see my old university comrade. He did not himself accompany me, but he was polite enough to give orders that I should be shown to his room. Alas! it was not long before his death; he was at this time confined to the house. M. Gour had not exactly *driven* him from his house, but he had ceased to employ him. He had engaged another tutor for Miss Zeozia . . . Fofa had been sent to the military school.

Avenir was seated near the window, sunk in an old easy chair *à la Voltaire*. The weather was glorious. An autumn sky joyously stretched its azure blue over a red and sombre line of lime-trees, now almost leafless, whose northern sides, with their deep golden yellow, seemed to have been chilled thus early by the cold blasts. The earth, which had been already several times covered with hoar-frost, sent up its moisture under the piercing sunbeams. The ruddy rays of the sun fell obliquely, creeping across the sickly grass; a low and mysterious crackling might be heard at intervals in the air, enlivened now and then by the loud voices of some workmen in the garden. Avenir was wrapt in an old dressing-gown; a green neckerchief which he wore threw a cadaverous hue on his sallow, withered face. My arrival gave him evidently the greatest pleasure; he pressed my hand, spoke, and then was seized with a fit of weeping. I tried to soothe him, and sat down by his side . . . He had on his knee a copy of the poems of Koltsoff, all beautifully written out. He laid his hand on the book smiling:—

"Here is a true poet!" he stammered, restraining a cough with difficulty, and making a great effort to recite, with a scarcely intelligible voice:—

"The falcon's wings, alas! are bound,
When the ways of the universe are open to him!"

I stopped him; the physician had forbidden him to speak. I knew how to give him pleasure. Sorokoumoff had not, as people say, followed the march of intellect in his progress; but it was one of his delights to hear how far the highest spirits had reached in their career. In former days, he would hang on some companion, lead him aside, and question him with a charming näivete. And this student, whom the professor's voice, and every learned book put to sleep in a few minutes, listened to, believed, admired, a fellow-student of his own age, and could for long after give an account of what he had heard from the lips of the young man, and almost in the same terms. The German philosophy in particular had a great attraction for him.

I, knowing this foible, and with the simple intention of giving the poor patient pleasure, began to speak like a fervent disciple of Hegel (believe me, Hegel and his doctrines have never gained my homage). Avenir approved of what I said by measured movements of his head, raised his eyebrows, smiled and muttered, "I follow, I follow, I comprehend, grand ideas, grand ideas! . . ." This infantine interest of a dying man, of a poor isolated creature, exposed daily to be turned out into the open air, and die on the way-side. . . . this ingenuousness on the part of a being so unfortunate moved me to tears. I wish my readers to observe, that Avenir, unlike the great majority of consumptive people, made no allusion to his malady, and its inevitable issue; he did not utter a sigh, never fell into dejection, and never

even hinted at his condition. It was only at a later period of my visit that I discovered he had a full consciousness of it.

Joy at seeing an old friend had given him some additional strength, and he was able to talk with me about Moscow, our old companions, Pouchkin, the theatre, and Russian literature. He recalled our breakfasts and suppers, the warm discussions of our little circle, and he pronounced with the most tender feelings the names of some deceased friends.

"You remember Dacha?" he added, at last. "Ah! she was a girl of soul! she had a heart of gold! and how fond she was of me! She loved me. What can have become of her? After my departure, I fear she must have pined, poor thing!"

I did not dare to dispel the sick man's illusion about Dacha's attachment to him. The fact was, that she was now in the enjoyment of an excessive embonpoint—that she had certain relations with some merchants—the house of the brothers Roudatchkoff and Co. —that she used white lead and carmine—had a very loud voice, an excessively free and easy air, and was never seen but adorned with jewels, and with a handsome equipage.

Meanwhile, I thought, as I looked at the wasted condition of my old companion, whether it might not be possible to take him out of this house, where he had suffered so much, and where he had the prospect of spending a miserable nine months' winter in what was little better than a prison? Perhaps he is not incurable after all. I hinted a change of air, but he at once divined my intention, and would not give me an opportunity of making a formal proposal.

"No, my friend; I thank you," he said, with a mixture of sensibility and resolution; "it matters

little where one dies. Ah! you see I cannot live even till the snow come; what need then of giving trouble to other people? I am accustomed to this room, and this arm-chair. I have borne with a good deal from the people here, and they must just bear with me now. They have been for eight years pretty . . ."

"Cruel, cruel, you would say," I added, interrupting him.

"Cruel, no . . . They are stupid people, who would fain appear brilliant. I cannot complain that the stupid should be stupid; that would be ridiculous. We have neighbours . . . M. Kafsatkin has a very well-bred daughter, amiable . . . a very good young lady, quite guiltless of pride . . . she . . ."

Sorokooumoff here coughed violently, then, spite of my expostulations, insisted on resuming . . . "Ah, that would be nothing, if they would only let me smoke a pipe . . . But I have made up my mind; I shall not die without attaining my wish; and that this very evening," he added, winking with a malicious smile; "God be praised, I have lived; and I have not been here without meeting many good people."

"Very good—but let me write, without further delay, to some members of your family who are interested in you."

"'Write to your relations'—so they say, so they say. Ah, my dear friend, what should I write? They cannot help me or remove me from this place. I will die here: be assured they will not forget to put me in the ground; and with all haste too. My relations will be informed of all that . . . is it not troublesome to speak of this? Tell me something about what you saw abroad."

I exerted myself to give him minute details in the hope of keeping him silent. He devoured me with his eyes. Evening approached, and I went . . . Nine days

after I received a letter with a black seal, from Gour Kroupianikoff; here it is—

"This is to inform you, my dear sir, that your friend the student, who resided with us, M. Avenir Sorokooumoff, gave up his soul to God last Tuesday, the fourth current, at two o'clock afternoon; and that this morning he was suitably interred *at my expense*, under the direction of my overseer, in *my* parish church. He requested that his books and papers should be conveyed to you, and the post will leave them with you today. In his drawers was found the sum of twenty-two roubles, fifty kopecks, which, along with his other effects, are to be immediately transmitted to his relations. Your friend was quite sensible to the last, and, to speak the truth, died with perfect indifference, displaying no kind of regret, even at the moment when we were all assembled to say farewell to him. Cleopatra Alexandrovna, *my wife*, salutes you. The death of your friend has shaken her nerves much. As to myself, I keep my health well; and have the honour to remain, your very humble servant, GOUR KROUPIANIKOFF."

Many other examples might be adduced in confirmation of what I have said; but I cannot think of inflicting them on my reader, except the case of a woman—dear reader—of a woman; and I will be brief.

A good old country lady died in my presence; the priest stood by her pillow, uttering the prayers for the dying. The standers by listened thoughtfully, the woman lay motionless; all at once, a change was perceptible; the officiating priest thinking she was just expiring, hastily put the cross on her lips. The woman turned round with an expression of displeasure. "Why in such a hurry, father?" she muttered with a tongue already paralysed. "Stop, you will get . . ."

She turned her left cheek on the pillow, made an effort to push her hand under it, and in this position expired . . .

Under the pillow was found a crown; her wish had been, even in her dying moments, to pay for the last prayer with her own hand.

Yes, the Russians have a way of their own when they die.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TAVERN. MUSICAL FEELING AMONG THE RUSSIANS.

THE little village of Kolotofka was formerly the property of a lady surnamed in the country Strygainkha (one who clips or shaves), on account of her sharp and ready humour; it now belongs to some German from St. Petersburg. This village is situated on the eastern slope of a barren hill, cut from top to bottom by a frightful ravine. Yawning like an abyss and torn up by the fury of the spring and autumn floods, this ravine runs right through the main and only street of the village, dividing the poor little hamlet into two parts, which, though face to face, are far from being on that account neighbours. A few meagre hazel trees maintain a precarious and hesitating existence on the irregular banks of the horrible and tortuous canal. The bottom, which seems to be a composition of various kinds of sand, is of a dry and copper-coloured tint, and covered with immense clayey boulders. It is to be confessed that the locality is far from an inviting one, and yet there is not an inhabitant within a circle of fourteen miles who is not familiar with the road to the village of Kolotofka, and who does not pay it a willing visit, and that pretty often too.

At the point where the ravine enters the village, a

few paces from the narrow cleft which forms its commencement, stands a little square house quite apart from the rest. It is thatched, and boasts a single chimney, which rises from the middle of the roof; it possesses only one window, and that at the back of the house, like a Cyclop's eye looking down upon the ravine, which on winter nights, lighted from within, is visible from afar through the thick and frosty mist—the pole-star of many a belated peasant. Above the door is nailed a blue sign-board; and as this cabin is at once the tavern and place of general rendezvous, it assumes the title of *Prityntî Rabatchok* (little tavern of refuge). I daresay that in this tavern with the euphonious surname, the grain wine is sold at the same price as in every other; but it is, notwithstanding, much more frequented than any establishment of a similar kind in the whole district. The reason of that is, that the host is Nicolaï Ivanytch.

Nicolaï Ivanytch—not so long ago a well-formed, handsome young fellow with fresh countenance and curly hair—now a man of remarkable rotundity, grey head, moist, perspiring face, and possessing an eye always animated by a fine geniality of expression, and a deeply-furrowed brow—has been established at Kolotofka for more than twenty years.

Nicolaï Ivanytch, like the majority of tavern-keepers, is a man of quick and penetrating mind; he is not distinguished by any particular politeness, but, without being communicative, he possesses the unconscious art of attracting customers, who seem to love to sit by the bar under the calm clear-seeing look of this phlegmatic personage. He is endowed with admirable good sense; he knows accurately the mode of life of every proprietor in the district, of every citizen and every peasant, as well as the state of their affairs. In difficult conjunctures

there would be wisdom in consulting him, but as a circumspect man he is far from desiring so great an honour, much preferring to remain under the shadow of his bar; it is consequently only by distant hints, uttered apparently by accident, that he puts his customers on the path of reason and good sense, and these only such of his customers as he takes a genuine interest in. He is learned in everything which it is important for a Russian to know—horses, cattle, building-timber, bricks, delft-ware, hides and leather, songs and dances.

When his tavern is empty, he generally sits like a sack of wheat on the ground before the door of his cottage, his slender legs drawn under him, and in this position exchanges greetings with all the passers by. This man has seen much; he has survived ever so many poor country gentlemen, who, if they did not look in as they passed to *rinse their throats*, at least provided themselves with their annual supply of brandy at his house. He knows everything that is going on within a circle of a hundred versts, and, so far from letting slip a word which might indicate what he knows, no one could even guess that he was quite intimately acquainted with a thousand little secrets beyond the suspicion of the police commissioner himself. He closes his lips, smiles, drinks, and passes the drinking cup. The neighbours have great respect for him; even his excellency M. Stcherepetenko, the most distinguished proprietor in the district, so far as civil rank is concerned, does not fail every time he passes, to salute him with an air of consideration. Nicolaï Ivanytch is clearly a man to be relied on.

He once induced a cattle stealer to restore a horse which he had stolen from the courtyard of one of his acquaintances; one morning he brought to their senses the peasants of a neighbouring village who had unani-

mously determined not to recognise a new overseer. Do not imagine, however, that his conduct in these matters is regulated by devotion to his neighbours; he wishes, in fact, only to prevent what might afterwards disturb his repose. His wife, a woman of firm and agile step, with a quick eye and thin nose, has lately become rather stout, like her husband. He has a blind confidence in her, and she keeps the keys of his strong-box. The turbulent drunkards are afraid of her; she is pretty firm with them; although, in general, plenty of noise is to be had from them, but little money. She decidedly prefers the silent, morose, and moderate drinkers to those who are habit and repute drunkards, who are sure to quarrel with one another.

It was a July day, oppressively hot, and I climbed the hill with difficulty in the direction of the Pritynni Rabatchok, on a footpath which ran along the slope of the ravine of Kolotofka. The sun ruled in the heavens like a merciless tyrant—terrible, implacable, unavoidable; the air was impregnated with a suffocating dust. I was tormented with thirst; there was neither spring nor stream at hand. At Kolotofka, as in the majority of steppian villages, the peasants, for lack of springs and wells, have accustomed their stomachs to a muddy marsh liquid. But who would be so bold as to honour with the name of water a liquid so disgusting? I resolved to pay a visit to Nicolaï Ivanytch, and enjoy a glass of beer or kvass.

I believe I have said that at no period of the year is the aspect of Kolotofka pleasing; but, under the pitiless rays of a July sun, it excites a feeling more than usually melancholy; the heat has shrivelled and calcined the brown and dilapidated roofs of the huts, and burnt up the scanty herbage of the hideous ravine; and the poor village flock—a flock dusty and wan, which does not, I

assure you, remind one of Holland or the Tyrol—among which large and meagre fowls stalk about—droop and languish under the sickly atmosphere. The sun strikes perpendicularly on the gray walls of an old ruin, the remains of an ancient seignorial mansion, a ruin where flourish luxuriously the nettle, the bourian,* and the wormwood. The marsh, with a black surface, speckled with the down of geese, seems to be evaporating its last moisture under the burning heat; hear the embankment which encloses it, and, resting on the dry shrivelled earth, the sheep breathe with difficulty, and, gasping for air, press languidly one upon the other, hanging their poor little muzzles as low as possible, as if to let the fiery torrents which the sun darts upon them pass over their heads.

Worn out with fatigue, I approached at last the dwelling of Nicolaï Ivanytch, causing an astonishment on the part of the children, which partook more of stupidity than anything else, and a discontent among the dogs, expressed in violent barkings, which seemed to do them some serious internal injury on the spot, for they were at once seized with violent coughing, and began to twist about as if they were the victims of convulsions. I reached the tavern, however. As I approached, there appeared on the threshold a man of tall stature; his head was bare, and from his whole appearance and manner, I could discover the eccentric man.

"Come! hallo, come, will you?" he stammered, raising his eyes and long eyebrows with considerable effort. "Come, Morgatch; what are you after? you creep and creep along, while people are waiting for you inside. Come!"

"Well, well, here I am, here I am," replied a small fretful voice, and from behind the house there emerged

* A tall herb, which grows in the southern steppes of Russia

a little lame man. He was clothed in a cloth tchouïka, in pretty good condition, one arm passed through the sleeve, and the other loose. A pointed hat hung over his eyebrows; his little yellow eyes were restless, and round his thin lips hovered a forced, reserved smile; his long pointed nose jutted out like a ship's prow.

"I am coming, my friend," he continued, steering for the tavern door; "but why call me in that fashion, and who is waiting for me?"

"Why call you?" replied, in a tone of friendly reproach, the tall man; "ah, Morgatch, what a droll fellow! you are asked to enter a tavern, and you wish to know why! Those who are waiting inside are good and right jovial fellows. There is Turk-Iachka and Dikï-Bârin, and the contractor of Jizdra. Iachka has taken a bet of a large measure of beer that he can sing better than the contractor . . . you understand?"

"Will Iachka sing?" said Morgatch, sharply; "you are not deceiving me, Obaldoui?"

"I am not a liar," replied Obaldoui, haughtily. "Your question is rude. There can be no doubt of Iachka's singing, I should think, when he has made a bet on it. Are you such a blockhead as not to see that? and such a brute as to tell me I lie?"

"Well, well, let us go in, Simplicity; let us go in, and have done."

They entered.

I suppose that very few of my readers have had an opportunity of making acquaintance with our country taverns; we sportsmen go everywhere. Their exterior aspect is that of a hut, and their interior arrangements are extremely simple. There is first a little passage of somewhat gloomy character, and this leads into a large room, called in Russ *beelaïa izba* (white, that is, clear room) divided into two by a partition, behind which

no one who is not a member of the family is allowed to pass. In this partition, above a large oak table, representing the bar, is cut an opening of greater breadth than length. Along the sides of this table are arranged, in several rows, the liquors in process of consumption; on the floor, just behind the opening, lie sealed bottles, arranged according to their sizes. The anterior part of the room—that devoted to visitors, is furnished with a single bench, running round the wall, two or three empty casks, and a table in the corner, under the holy image. Village taverns are, for the most part, gloomy enough, and you rarely ever see on the naked beams of which the walls are composed, the coarse images called *loubotchnyïa* (bark) so strongly coloured, and which no hut in Russia could want.

When I entered, I found already assembled a pretty large company.

At the bar, his huge body almost filling the entire opening in the partition, was Nicolaï Ivanytch, pouring out two glasses of eau-de-vie with his white flabby hands to his two friends, Morgatch and Obaldowi. Behind him, in a corner, and just half seen, was his wife, keeping evidently a watchful eye upon her lord and master.

In the middle of the room was a thin man of about twenty-three, clothed in a long blue nankin cafetan. He had the air of a factory workman, and his colour was far from indicating very robust health. His large restless grey eyes, his straight nose and flexible nostrils, his white sloping brow, his yellow curls, pushed behind his ears, and his lips, somewhat inclined to thickness, but fresh and expressive—all revealed a fiery and impassioned nature. He was in a state of great agitation; he opened and shut his eyes, and breathed unequally, and his arms trembled as if suffering from an ague-fever.

And indeed he had a fever, that neuralgic fever so well known by all those who have to sing or speak in public. It was the artist Iachka. Near him stood a man of about forty, with low forehead, thick cheeks, horizontal tartar eyes, nose short and flat, square chin, and black and brilliant hair. Without moving his body, he looked slowly round him, like an ox under the yoke. This man went by the name of the Savage-Gentleman, Dikï-Bârin.

Opposite him, on the corner of the bench under the images, was seated the rival of Iachka, the contractor of the town of Jizdra—a man of moderate height, but well formed, about thirty years old, with a face covered with red spots, flat and crooked nose, slightly wall-eyed, and possessed of a fine silken beard.

"What is the matter, now?" cried Obaldoui, after tossing off a glass of eau-de-vie. "What do you wait for? Let us begin. Hallo! Iachka!"

"Yes, yes; come, commence," said the tavern-keeper in a tone of encouragement.

"Good; let us begin!" said the contractor, in a calm and confident tone, smiling at the same time; "I am ready."

"And I too; I am ready," muttered Turk-Iachka, not without some hesitation.

"It is time," exclaimed Dikï-Bârin, in a gruff, dictatorial voice. "We shall draw lots: you will draw," he added, addressing Morgatch.

Morgatch, pleased to play a part in all this, smiled, seized the cap with both hands, and shook it well.

There was a profound silence; the two lots struck against each other. I watched attentively the faces of those present—all expressed the highest anticipation. Even Dikï-Bârin knitted his brows. Morgatch plunged his hand into the cap, and pulled out the contractor's

[redacted]ere was a stir in the assembly. Iachka reddened; [redacted]tractor passed his hand through his hair.

"[redacted]hat shall I sing?" he said, with some emotion.

"[redacted]hat song you please," said the tavern-keeper, crossing his arms on his breast; "one does not [redacted]ne song more than another; sing what you like to sing, only take care to sing well, and we shall pronounce our judgment conscientiously."

"Yes, conscientiously," added Obaldoui, as he licked the rim of his empty glass.

"My friends, give me a little time to collect myself," said the contractor, playing with the fur collar of his coat.

"Bah, bah! no more off-putting and excuses . . . begin," said Dikï-Bârin, resolved to hear only, and speak no more. The contractor mused a moment, shook his head, and moved towards the centre of the room.

Before describing the musical contest which took place on this occasion, it will not be out of place to say a few words about each of the personages of my narrative.

Let us begin with Obaldoui. His real name is Evgraff Ivanoff; but in our districts he never receives any other name than Obaldoui,* a soubriquet of which he is himself quite proud. It is suitable enough for this good-for-nothing brawler, this meddlesome marplot, whose features, like his long arms and tongue, are in continual agitation. He was at one time a servingman,—a habitual drunkard, whom his masters had dismissed to take care of himself; and though he never has any occupation anywhere, and never receives a kopeck from a single soul, he somehow finds the means of amusing himself at the expense of others. There

* From the verb *oboltat*, to talk a great deal, to be always in motion, restless, &c.

are a great many people of his acquaintan
treat him to tea and brandy, though they co
themselves tell why; for he is never in the leas
ing; on the contrary, he disgusts everybody by hi
talk, his mosquito-like pertinacity, his nervous r
ness, and his loud hollow laugh.

Morgatch has no trait of resemblance with Obal
The name Morgatch, or the Winker, is a nickname t
man has received no one can say why, for he does not wink more than any other person. The Russian people are naturally disposed to dub every one with some soubriquet, and the man who lives in twenty places runs great risk of having twenty nicknames, and of course it would be a wonder if all of them were equally just and appropriate. In spite of my desire to know something about the history of Morgatch, there still remain, as the people who make books say, many points in his life enveloped in thick and impenetrable darkness. All that I know is,—that he was once coachman in the house of an old lady without family,—that he ran away with three of the best horses committed to his care,—was not to be found for a whole year,—that, having probably convinced himself of the dangers and miseries of a vagabond life, he returned, of his own accord, in a dreadful condition,—lame, haggard, and in rags,—but repentant and beseeching pardon at the feet of his mistress; by his exemplary conduct, caused his past faults to be forgotten; regained, by degrees, the favour, and afterwards the full confidence, of the lady; became steward of her property; and, on the death of this excellent person, found himself free, and enrolled among the odnovortzi. He afterwards became a farmer on the lands of a neighbouring proprietor, made his fortune, and now lives in the enjoyment of easy circumstances.

He is a shrewd fellow, full of practical wisdom. His moral character is neither good nor bad. He is a clever speculator, has a good knowledge of human character, and does not fail to show it on occasion. He is circumspect and bold, in case of need, like the fox; he will sometimes chatter like an old woman, but without ever saying a word he does not intend to say, although he induces other people to utter what they would fain have kept concealed. He does not assume the look and manner of a fool, like so many cunning fellows of his kind, and indeed he would find it difficult to play this part; for I have never seen eyes so piercing, so sparkling with intelligence, as the small roguish eyes of this honest peasant. He never looks you straight in the face, but sideways, up or down; in short, in every other direction.

The *Contractor* is a contractor, and goes by no other name in this part of the country; he will supply you with goods of every kind, from beef, fish, and candles, to bricks, stone, lime, and wood for a house; he will let you a house, or sell you a hunting-dog, provide you with a stock of lucifer matches, or of stewpans.

To pass to Turk-Iachka, or Iakoff, his rival in singing: The soubriquet of Turk, he has received from the fact that his mother was a Turkish woman, brought as a prisoner into Russia. This man, despite his coarse external appearance, is in soul an artist—an artist in every sense of the word. He is engaged in a paper manufactory belonging to a merchant in the neighbourhood.*

* While with us in the west, the neighbourhood means a circumference of from one to ten miles, with the Russian, when there is any pleasure to be had, the neighbourhood is anywhere from five to a hundred and fifty miles distance.

As regards the Dikï-Bârin,* I shall not be so sparing of details—the high civilization of the present age having had the singular effect of spreading a taste fo savages. I ought to premise that the character of this man is more enigmatical, less savage, and less lordly than the title he bears would at first incline us to believe.

The first expression which the appearance of this man produces, is the feeling of a brute force—a rude, massive, tremendous indomitable power. He seems endowed with the physical robustness and health of a Hercules; he looks as if he were cut out of heart of oak, only in this heart of oak there is life sufficient for ten men. If my reader does not wish to see him presented as Alcides, I have much pleasure in recommending him to his notice as a bear; but, again, I must inform him that my friend the bear is far from being without grace—that, on the contrary, there is an incontestable and unmistakeable grace in his appearance and manner, which proceeds, as I believe, from the sweet and placid confidence he has in the power of his ursine humanity. It is very difficult to guess, at first sight, in what social category we ought to place this personage. One can only describe him by negatives; he is neither a domestic servant, nor an odnovoretz, nor a man of business, nor a ruined or retired lawyer; still less is he a gentleman, a John Lackland—the victim of his own folly, or a sportsman, or a poacher, or a boxer, or a parasite. He is what he is, a man of overwhelming physical power, of an inoffensive disposition, who does what he pleases, and to whom one always yields without thinking about it. No one can tell to what his affection for our district is owing; some have expressed the opinion that he is *certainly* descen-

* The savage gentleman or lord.

ded from an odnovoretz family, and that he *must have been* in the army, or at least in the civil service, in the administrative, if not in the judiciary department. The fact is, no one can give any positive information about him, and he alone could write his history, if he knows how to write—and even this is still his own secret. As regards conversing with him, it is easy to see that he is naturally silent and morose.

My reader may still ask, what are his means of living? One thing appears certain; he has no profession, no trade, no business. He never goes to anybody's house, he does not seek the acquaintance of anybody, and yet he is never in want of money, and takes nothing on credit. I cannot say that he is modest—that would not be the correct expression, but he is always peaceable; he lives like a man who is independent of all authority, and has made up his mind, once for all, to take no notice of anybody. When speaking of him, people never employ any other designation than the soubriquet of Diki-Bârin; but when addressing him, they call him Perevleçoff. No one has ever remarked that he endeavoured to lord it over the poorer people, and nevertheless he possesses great influence throughout the district. He is obeyed without a grudge, although he has not the least right to give orders, and indeed never allows the slightest suspicion to escape him that he has any idea of the sort.

He says a word, gives a sign, and he is obeyed. Such is the privilege of power; the idea that it may advance makes us draw back; the idea that it may compel, causes us to come. He very seldom drinks any liquor, and never speaks to women; but is madly fond of vocal music, whether it is a man or a woman who is singing.

The character of this man attracts the attention much

more powerfully than any enigma, than any inscription, than any mystery created by the faculty of infinite combination living in the human brain; for a man, as a theme for study and examination, is an abyss that cannot be fathomed—he is something almost infinite, for he comes from God himself. It seems to me that in Perevleçoff lie hid extraordinary forces which he keeps sternly chained in the depths of his soul—well knowing that if ever they should rise and break forth into the world without, they would instantly become intoxicated with the free air, and dash and shatter him to pieces against the opposing forces that met them in the external world. And I much deceive myself, if, in the life of this man, there has not happened something of this kind; if, taught and enlightened by experience, after having with difficulty saved himself from some tragical fate, he does not pitilessly, despotically, keep himself under a constraint and a surveillance which absorb all his time, and all his faculties. What has struck me most in Perevleçoff, is this feeling of an immense natural force, an innate ferocity—the impulses of which, suppressed with great difficulty, now and then suddenly appear in his look—joined to a goodness of heart just as natural: two qualities which I have never seen united in any other person in the same degree.

The contractor, standing between the counter and the corner he had been sitting in, with his eyes half-shut, began, in a very high falsetto, a national air, which I heard for the first time, and which certainly cannot be compassed, except by a voice capable of reaching, with equal purity, the very highest notes. His voice was sweet and agreeable, though in some places thin; he played with it as a girl would with a toy sparkling with rubies; the sound appeared to come from the clouds, and to remount and descend unceasingly;

and from these elevated heights rained clouds of dazzling melody, floating and undulating in the air, from which would dart points like shooting stars, and lose themselves in the silence . . . and after these pauses, which hardly left him time to draw breath, he would resume with a sweep and a boldness that carried away the soul.

In the rapid evolutions of his execution, sweet and strong notes succeeded each other, and the perfect art which he shewed in managing these transitions, interested me more than all his shakes and roulades, wonderful as they were for the musical purity and skill displayed in them. Every connoisseur would have been delighted to hear what I was listening to; a German alone might have been dissatisfied. His voice was a Russian *tenore di grazia;* it would have been enjoyed and appreciated at Milan, or at Venice, or at Naples, and, as a light tenor, at Paris. His *theme* was a merry dance-air, the words of which, so far as I was able to catch them amidst the interminable fioritures and shakes, seemed to be those of a national love-song.

All listened with attention. He evidently felt that he had before him judges of experience and ability; and he did not spare himself. In fact, the district which I inhabit can count by the hundred acute connoisseurs in music; and the reputation of the large town of Serghievskoë, which stands on the Orel high road, is far from being accidental or unmerited—the reputation which it enjoys throughout Russia, as the locality which has produced the sweetest and most charming specimens of vocal melody.

In spite of all his efforts, the contractor sang for some time without producing any very powerful effect on his audience; he wanted a chorus to sustain him in the refrain. At last, after a very difficult passage on

a marvellously high key—a passage which made even Dikï-Bârin smile with pleasure, Obaldoui could no longer contain himself, and uttered a loud shout of delight. A rapturous shudder passed through all. Obaldoui and Morgatch began to follow the contractor in a low tone, to take the part of chorus, and when the singer's voice rose alone, they whispered and muttered to each other: "Magnificent . . . that's the thing that's the thing . . yes, yes, well-done ! . . ahi ! ahi ! capital ! . . ah ! Iakoff has no chance . . the devil ! ahi ! . ." and many other polite exclamations of the same sort.

Nicolaï Ivanytch, seated on a corner of his counter, wagged his head approvingly to the right and left. Obaldoui made a thousand grimaces, shrugged his shoulders in the most convulsive manner, and stamped his heels on the floor with a supernatural energy. Iakoff's eyes were red and inflamed, he trembled like a leaf, and a restless vague smile played on his face. Dikï-Bârin never changed a feature of his countenance, and sat motionless in his seat; but his look, fixed on the singer, bore a remarkable sweetness of expression, though his lip was curled as if in disdain.

Encouraged by these evidences of the general delight, the virtuoso rose into a perfect whirlwind of song, executed such roulades, such wonderful shakes, and poured forth such cataracts of sound, that, when at last, pale, exhausted, and bathed in perspiration, he uttered his last notes, which seemed to be lost in the infinite heights of space, a general shout of rapture rose at once from all quarters of the room. Obaldoui threw himself on the neck of the contractor, and pressed him in his long bony arms; on the broad fat countenance of Nicolaï Ivanytch shone a ruddy glow, that took twenty years from his age; Iakoff shouted as if he had

lost his senses, "Molodetz! molodetz!"* Even my poor neighbour, the ragged moujik, could not resist the general enthusiasm, struck his fist on the table, cried, "*Ah gha! Ah gha!* it is beautiful; devil take me, it is capital!" and spat boldly to the other side of the room.†

"You have given us a treat, brother," cried Obaldoui, without quitting his hold of the exhausted singer; "and what a treat! what a treat! You have certainly gained the victory, brother! Iachka need not trouble himself trying . . ."

"Leave him alone, leave him alone, I tell you, tiresome blockhead!" cried Morgatch; "don't you see he is tired almost to death? You marplot! you are always making a fuss. You're like the bath-leaf,‡ or the fly in the honey—there's no getting rid of you."

"Well! let him sit down," replied Obaldoui; "I am going to drink his health," he added, going up to the counter. "I expect you will pay for it," nodding to the contractor, who returned a sign of consent.

"You sing well, brother! I say *well!*" said Nicolaï Ivanytch, in the tone of a man who knows the impor-

* Capital fellow.

† It is incredible how much the lower classes of the Russian people are addicted to spitting; they employ it as a sign of enthusiasm, of admiration, of fear, of joy, and of contempt. It is the remnant of an old and obstinate superstition: it seems that in spitting, a person casts out the devil, who is always ready to take advantage of the forgetfulness of a poor fellow to go down his throat.

‡ The Russians have a custom of beating themselves in their baths with bunches of fine supple hazel twigs, for the purpose of inducing copious perspiration, with the temperature ranging from 62° to 75° Fahrenheit. Some of the leaves will adhere to the skin, and resist all attempts at abrasion, and even the application of buckets of hot water poured over the body.

tance of what he is saying. "There, now, it is your turn, Iachka; pay attention, brothers! don't be afraid, keep up your heart, Iachka! We shall see, we shall judge. You have heard for yourself, you have owned yourself that the contractor sings well, really well, upon my word."

"He sings *vely* well, *vely* well,"* added the tavern-keeper's wife.

"Capitally, *gha, ah gha!*" bellowed the moujik.

"Ah! the wriggler! the poleëka!† what the devil is he doing here?" cried Obaldoui immediately, and approaching the boor, he pointed his finger at him, and burst into a loud shout of laughter; "*poleëka, gha, badea, poniaï, gha*, the wriggler! Come, shuffler, where have you fallen from?"

The unhappy moujik trembled; he was just going to rise and leave the room, when the brazen voice of Dikï-Bârin thundered—

"Will that animal not leave a body in peace?"

"I . . . I am doing nothing," muttered Obaldoui.

"Hold your tongue! . . . And you, Iakoff, begin."

* Many of the Russians preserve all their lives the habit of substituting the liquids and softer letters for the gutturals and those of a harsher sound, as *l, ll,* for *r* and *cl;* they say *dilector* for *director, collidor* for *corridor;* for these, and many such words, have passed into the Russian language. Some speak exactly like little children, which has a very odd effect in the case of men with large, bushy beards, and immense paunches.

† Poleëki, border-foresters. The people who inhabit the southern border of the long belt of forests which commences at the boundary of Bolkhoff and Jizdrinsk are so called. They have many peculiarities in their modes of life, their manners, and their language. They are commonly called wrigglers, shufflers, "artful dodgers," *zavorotni*, on account of their suspicious and avaricious character. The words employed by Obaldoui are favourite expressions among these people. They are mere interjections.

Iakoff rose, muttered some unconnected words, and appeared overwhelmed with agitation. All eyes were upon him—the contractor's more anxiously and fixedly than the rest; there was observable in his countenance, too, beneath his natural assurance and the triumphant expression which his recent success had created, a vague restlessness for which I could see no motive, observing, as I did, the great timidity displayed by his rival. He leaned back against the wall, and kept perfectly motionless.

The singer sighed, drew a long breath, and commenced. The first note promised little; it was feeble, unequal, and did not seem to proceed from his chest; it appeared, rather, to come from a distance—from without—and to have been thrown by chance, as it were, into the midst of the attentive audience. It produced a singular effect upon all of us; we looked at each other, but each seemed to redouble his attention, and determined not to lose a note of this second part of the concert. He went on—his voice becoming clearer, fuller, and firmer; he grew animated, and his song rose and swelled, and carried every soul along with it. It was of a remarkably melancholy character, and began thus:—"*O! there's many a path leads to the prairie!*"

I have rarely heard a voice of such exquisite freshness. Weak and broken at first, with a sickly tone that was far from pleasing, it afterwards revealed sentiment so profound, passion so true—such a mixture of power, sweetness, youth, and a charming abandon, with tones of poignant sorrow, as to search and shake the soul of every listener. The whole power of the Russian soul—naturally good, warm, and ingenuous—breathed forth in this voice, which went right to the heart of every one, awaking the national melancholy

with the magic of its notes. He had now lost every trace of his former timidity, and gave himself up with his whole soul to the enjoyment of his own singing. He had completely forgotten his rival and his audience. There was something genuine, national, large, invigorating, ineffably sweet, in the tone of his voice, like the breeze that sweeps across the boundless steppes of our country.

My ear was struck with the sound of stifled sobs. . . . It was the tavern-keeper's wife. Iakoff cast a rapid glance at her, and his voice continued not less sonorous and impassioned. The breast of Nicolaï Ivanytch was palpitating with delight; Morgatch's eye glowed and dilated; Obaldoui, stupified, sat with his mouth open; my neighbour the peasant could not restrain his sobs; while, on the iron countenance of Dikī-Bârin, under his long eyelashes, stood two large tears, ready to burst and flow down his cheeks. Iakoff's rival sat with his fist clenched against his forehead, and without making the least movement. . . .

I do not know how all this would have ended, overpowered as we all were by these feelings, had not Iakoff suddenly concluded with a shrill note of an extraordinary delicacy, boldness, and purity. No one shouted or spoke—no one moved; we seemed to be all waiting for the return from the skies of this wonderful, ravishing sound. . . . Iakoff opened his eyes; he seemed astonished at this silence; his look appeared to ask the reason of it. It was not long before he understood it—the victory was gained.

"Iakoff!" . . . said the Dikī-Bârin, placing on his shoulder a hand trembling with emotion; and he could not utter another syllable.

We were all as if petrified with astonishment. The rival of Iakoff rose, went up to him:

"You have won . . . yes . . . you have won," he said, with an agitation painful to behold, and left the tavern.

This rapid movement, this sudden opening and shutting of the door, broke the enchantment which lay like a paralysis upon body and soul; every one found his tongue, and the room began to resound with the usual chat . . . . I left the room and walked home.

I was descending with rapid strides the side of a ravine, when, from a distance in the valley, the shrill voice of a child suddenly broke the stillness of the night. "Antrôpka! Antrôpka! a, a, a!" More than thirty times did the name of Antrôpka strike on my ear, but no answer was returned. At last I heard a voice, [illegible]ened by distance, shout in return, "What?"

[illegible]he voice of the first child, full of a malignant glee, [illegible]ied—"Come here, you demon, come here, you [illegible]evil!"

"What do you want me for?" answered the other, after a silence of two minutes.

"Come here! aunt is going to whip you—they're waiting!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

KARATAEFF OR THE SLAVE MISTRESS.

One autumn about five years ago, on the road from Moscow to Toula, I was obliged to remain a whole day at a road-side inn for want of horses. I was returning from shooting, and had been imprudent enough to send away my troïka. The postmaster, a sulky old man, with long hair hanging over his nose, and little sunken sleepy eyes, answered all my prayers and complaints with an uncourteous grunt, walked with a hard heavy step, and opened and shut the doors in the noisiest manner he could, with the air of cursing his employment. The going out on the door-steps, his loud hoarse voice would be heard scolding the postilions, rough peasants in toulups, who were dully tramping up and down in the mud with harness-bows of about fifty pounds weight on their arms, or seated on the bench yawning and scratching themselves, without paying any attention to their master's bawling.

Three times I took tea, three times I tried to sleep; I read and re-read all the devices, all the bon mots inscribed on the walls and window-panes by the idleness, the ill-nature, or the stupidity of travellers; I was half-dead with ennui. I was standing at the window looking at the shafts of my tarantas* sticking up in the air, when suddenly a little bell sounded, and a small car drawn by

* A sort of litter mounted on wheels.

three very spare horses stopped at the door of the inn. The traveller who jumped out of the light vehicle cried out on entering the room, "Hallo! quick! I want horses!" While he listened with the strange, astonished air usual in such cases, to the negative answer of the blunt inspector, I had time to observe him and eye him from head to foot, with the eager curiosity of a man who is dying of ennui, and has a selfish pleasure in welcoming the companion of his misery.

He seemed to be a man of about thirty years of age. The small-pox had left ineffaceable marks on his countenance, which was very thin, and of a copper hue; his long hair, dark as the raven's wing, floated over the collar of his cloak; his small but prominent eyes looked without seeming to care for seeing anything; on his upper lip grew a small, rather ragged moustache. He was dressed in the fashion of a country gentleman and frequenter of horse fairs, in a striped arkhalouk* much the worse for wear, which had lost its colour and was very much rumpled, a cravat of purple silk fretted with age, a waistcoat with brass buttons, a grey pair of trousers very wide at the foot, from beneath which peeped forth the points of a pair of boots which had long been strangers to the brush. This gentleman exhaled an acrid perfume of tobacco and brandy. On his large red fingers, almost covered by the sleeves of his arkhalouk, were rings of silver and of Toula iron. It was one of those figures seen everywhere in Russia; and which, to speak the truth, if they are not altogether repulsive, are certainly far from being generally attractive. It was not, then, with any prepossession in his favour, that I narrowly examined my companion, although before twenty minutes had elapsed, I thought I

* A sort of paletot.

discovered in him a certain expression of good nature and genial cordiality.

"This gentleman has been waiting for more than hour," said the postmaster pointing to me.

More than an hour! . . the scoundrel was mocking me to my face.

"Perhaps the gentleman is not in such a hurry as I am," said the traveller.

"I am not aware," replied the inspector with grim humour.

"So there are no horses? What! Not even a pair?"

"I have not even a single horse to give you."

"Well, let me have some tea. I shall wait, since I can do nothing else."

The bronzed traveller seated himself on the bench which lined the walls of the room, flung his cap on a seat, and adjusted his long hair.

"You have taken tea?" He inquired of me.

"Yes."

"Wouldn't you take another cup with me? Do be so kind."

I consented. The large red samovar appeared for the fourth time on the table. I went to my tarantas and took out a bottle of good rum.

I had not deceived myself in taking my companion for a country gentleman. His name was Peoter Pétrovitch Karataëff. We began to talk together. Forty minutes had not passed before he related to me the whole history of his life, without evasion and without concealment.

"I am going at present to Moscow," he said, while engaged upon his fourth cup of tea; "I have nothing now to keep me in the country."

"How? Nothing more to do!"

"Nothing. Everything is in confusion on my property; the peasants are ruined; there have been several bad years all in close succession; no crops, no luck . . ." And then, he added, looking aside, "I don't understand anything about rural economy."

"A little study and good will . . ."

"No, no, the stuff isn't in me to make an agriculturist of . . . No, do you see," he pursued, leaning his head to one side, and sending forth immense volumes of smoke . . . "I know very well that you . . . when you look at me . . . you think, this is a . . . hem, hem! Well, it is true, I confess I have had but a poor education; it could not be helped—circumstances, you understand. Pardon me, I am a good-natured fellow, rather stupid, and, upon my word, you . . ."

He concluded by that odd apologetic deprecatory gesture so common in Russia, which is employed, in fact, by everybody, except those cultivated people who have travelled, or who frequent the saloons of the three capitals.

I did my best to convince him that he was mistaken in regard to the opinion I had formed of him, and that I was very happy to have met him. I added, for the purpose of inducing him to return to the subject, that there was no need of a superior education to manage an estate.

"Yes," he replied, "I agree with you; but I have no sort of liking for the thing. I know a landed proprietor who is a great fool; and yet everything succeeds with him . . . and I . . . Are you—pardon my presumption—of Piter* or of Moscow?"

"I live in St. Petersburg."

My friend sent from his nostrils two long and rapid whiffs, and added—

* Piter, a common abbreviation in the provinces for St. Petersburg.

"I am going to Moscow to try and get an office."

"In what department of the public service do you wish to be employed?"

"Well, I don't know. I have no definite notion on the subject; I shall see what will turn up. If I must confess it, I am not at all inclined to enter the service; I dread every sort of responsibility. I have lived all my life in the country; I am accustomed to certain habits of living . . . you understand . . . But necessity compels me . . . ah! cursed necessity!"

"It will be some compensation to live in a capital."

"In a capital . . . I don't know, for my part, what pleasure there may be in that. I shall see; perhaps it may be agreeable; but, till I know from experience, I am inclined to think there is nothing like a country life for a landed proprietor."

"Is it really impossible for you to live any longer on your estate?"

"Yes . . . yes, quite impossible," he said, sighing, ". . . my estate has not the appearance any longer of belonging to me . . . You see . . . there is an excellent neighbour of mine who has taken rather too much to do with my affairs . . . then there is a bill . . .

Poor Peoter Pétrovitch passed his hand several times over his face, and remained silent, shaking his head.

"In fact, sir," he added, after a minute's silence, "I need not make the thing worse by complaining about it, that would be stupid and ridiculous; I loved too much, and the devil take this world! I have still a great weakness in that way."

"You led a merry life in the country?"

"Sir . . . I had,"—speaking with hesitation, and the air of a man who fears blame, and yet cannot keep himself from talking—"I had twelve race-horses—famous runners, capital runners—very few like them.

Not one of them that would not have overtaken the grey hare in two minutes. Then, my dogs, I might well be proud of them. Ah! these are old stories now. I went shooting too, pretty often. I had a bitch of the name of Comteses—she had an extraordinary scent; nothing escaped her nose. I would say to her at the edge of a marsh, "Seek him out!" and if she didn't find anything, the best pack in the country would not have discovered anything either; if she found something, nothing could equal her delight—she was mad with joy. And at home, what good breeding! if you offered her a piece of bread with the left hand, and said, "The Jew has been biting it," she would not take it; if you presented it with the right hand, and said, "The young lady has had a piece of it," it was instantly seized and devoured. She brought me an admirable little dog that I wanted to take with me to Moscow. But a friend asked me for the mother, and the puppy, and my gun too; he said to me, 'You won't be shooting at Moscow, you'll have something very different in your head.' Well, I gave him the dogs, and made him a present of the fowling-piece too; there is no doubt, besides, but that it ought to have remained in the country at any rate."

"Why? There is shooting to be had at Moscow too."

"No; my friend was right; the pleasures of the field are over for me. I have been foolish enough in my time, and now I must expiate all that folly. Allow me to ask you a question—is living dear in Moscow?"

"Not at all, in my opinion."

"Not very dear? Pray, tell me, do the Tsyganes (*Bohemians*) live in Moscow?"

"What Tsyganes do you mean?"

"The Tsyganes who go about singing in our fairs."

"Yes, they stay in Moscow."

"Ah! that is capital. I like the Tsyganes; the devil take me, I like them! . . . And the features of Peoter Pétrovitch lighted up with the liveliest expression of delight. Suddenly he became uneasy on his seat, turned again and again; then he remained immovable and thoughtful, with his head down, and, stretching out his empty cup, said—

"Give me some rum."

"There is no more tea."

"Never mind, I can take it without, come!"

Karataëff leaned his head on his hands, and his elbows on the table. I looked at him in silence, and listened without reply to those effusions of sentiment of which half drunken people are so prodigal; but I was much struck, I confess, with the expression of dejectedness—of absolute prostration on his features; and I could not refrain from asking what was the matter.

"Nothing," he said. "The memory of the past has returned, and particularly one . . I shall be glad to tell you all about it; but indeed, I am afraid . ."

"Not at all! go on, if you please."

"Yes," he pursued with some hesitation, "there are certain circumstances . . although . . well . . I . . Well, if you wish, I shall tell you the whole story. But, after all, I don't know . ."

"Come, come, my dear Peoter Pétrovitch."

"Very well, although it may be a little . . Ah! you see, I am a stepniak, you easily see that . . and, indeed, I don't know . ."

"Go on, Peoter Pétrovitch, you are speaking to a friendly ear."

"Very well then; this is what happened to me. I was living in my village, and of course, in my shooting excursions, walked about a good deal in the neighbourhood. One day I happened to see a little girl; ah!

what a pretty girl! . . a beauty! . . and with all that, clever and good-hearted too; her name was Matrena. But she belonged to the lower class, you understand; she was a servant, a slave. She did not belong to me —that was the pity. She belonged to some other estate, she was the property of other people, and I, poor fool, fell deeply in love with her. You see, it is a . . pardon me! Well, she loved me too. So Matrena began to plead earnestly with me to purchase her, to go to her mistress, and pay the sum that was asked, and take her home with me. I was thinking about that myself too. Her mistress was a rich lady of the old—the very old school. Her house was about fifteen versts from mine. Well! one fine morning, as they say, I had my finest troïka harnessed to my best drochka; my favourite horse was put in too . . ah! an Asiatic such as you don't see every day; I called him *Lampourdos*, from the beauty and glossiness of his skin . . . I dressed myself in the best style, and set out for the house of Matrena's mistress.

"Having taken all these measures for the purpose of producing a favourable impression at first, I reached the house—a large mansion with two elegant wings, a magnificent drive and square in front of it, and large gardens behind. Matrena was waiting for me in a corner, she wished to speak to me; but all she could do was to kiss her hand to me. I entered the antechamber; I asked if the lady of the house was at home. A tall good-natured looking lackey came to me and said—'How do you wish to be announced, sir?' . . . 'Go, my good fellow, announce M. Karataëff, a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood . . . and say that I am come on business.' The lackey left with the message. I waited in the room, thinking—Shall I succeed? or shall I not? If she should go, the old

fool, and ask an extravagant price! . . . She is rich, yes, that is plain; but for all that, she may be quite capable of asking, for example, five hundred roubles for Matrena.

"'The lackey returned and announced to me that I was expected in the drawing-room. On entering, I saw seated in an arm chair, a little old woman, of a bilious complexion, winking her two eyes with a movement as rapid as the second-hand of a clock, that beats sixty times a minute. I walked up to her; she asked me directly what I wanted. You may imagine that without making any pretensions to sympathy or interest, I thought it at least polite to say first to the lady that I was happy to see her, and to make the acquaintance of her ladyship. 'You are mistaken, I am not the mistress of this estate; I am a relation of the lady; tell me what you want' . . . 'Allow me to say that it is my respected neighbour with whom I wished to speak' . . . 'Maria Illinichna does not receive visitors today; she is indisposed; what is it you want?' . . . 'Come now,' I thought, 'I must go straight into the business,' and I mentioned Matrena, and explained the purpose of my visit. 'Matrena, the girl Matrena . . .' muttered the old woman, winking as hard as ever, 'who *is* this Matrena?' . . . 'Matrena Fedorovna, the daughter of Fédor Koulikoff' . . . 'Ah! Matrena, the daughter of big Koulik! And how do you come to know this girl?' . . . 'By mere chance' . . . 'And she is aware of your intention of purchasing her?' . . . 'Yes, madam' . . . 'Very good! I'll set her to rights; she's a pretty baggage!' said the lady, passing from her usual saffron tint to chocolate. A silence of very ill omen followed.

"'I was amazed, never having suspected that my proposal could have been productive of disagreeable

consequences to the poor girl. 'Matrena is not to blame: I am ready to pay a reasonable sum for her, and I beg you to be so good as to mention it.' The stiff wiry curls sticking out from the face of the old lady bristled up and shook portentously, she blew and puffed at a furious rate, and said in a creaking voice, 'Here's a pretty piece of business! We have great need of your money to be sure! I shall give it her, I shall give it her; we shall put all that nonsense out of her head; we know the receipt for that, my fine fellow.' (The old lady fell into a fit of coughing, and became as dark as coffee.) 'She is not comfortable with us, the hussy! O you little she-devil, you will pay for this; heaven pardon me if I don't make her smart for this!'

"I must confess to you that at these words I was weak enough to fall into a passion. 'Why this anger against a poor girl? Can you tell me in what way she is at all culpable? . . .' The old woman crossed herself, 'Ah! heaven, have I . . .' 'This girl doesn't belong to you, madam . . .' 'You have nothing to do with the affair, sir; Maria Illinichna knows what to do; it is you who interfere; for myself, sir, I shall take care to remind Matrena to whom she owes obedience, whose hands and feet she ought to kiss.

"I should have liked very well at that moment to tear the cap off the head of the old fury; but I remembered Matrena, and my arms remained glued to my sides. I was by this time so confused that I hardly knew what I was saying, and I said at random, 'Ask what sum you please for Matrena.' . . . 'What do you wish her for?' . . 'She has pleased me, madam; she pleases me; be so good as to enter a little into my situation; allow me to kiss your hand.' Would you believe that I actually kissed the hand of this cursed old sor-

ceress? 'Well,' muttered the old woman, 'I shall lay the whole before Maria Illinichna, she will decide, you may come here the day after to-morrow.'

"I returned home in a state of great agitation. I could easily understand that I had broached the affair very awkwardly—that I ought not to have allowed my feelings in regard to the girl to be seen, and I perceived that it was unfortunately now too late to pretend indifference. Two days after I again waited on the lady. I was introduced this time into her private room, furnished with great splendour; she was there herself, reclining on a beautiful fauteuil, her head leaning on a cushion. The old relation who had received me on my former visit was present, and there was in the room besides a young lady with white eyelashes and eyebrows, a mouth awry, in a high-necked gown as green as that meadow. I took this young woman to be the lady's companion. The lady asked me to be seated; I sat down. She inquired my age, where I had served, how I meant to live in future; she spoke with a certain tone of haughtiness and superiority. I replied to her questions.

"She took out her pocket-handkerchief and fanned her face with it, as if she perceived some bad odour; then she said, speaking slowly, her words giving each other abundance of time to make their appearance—"Katerina Karpovna here has mentioned to me the proposal you communicated to her two days ago. She mentioned it to me, though she knew well herself that there is a principle from which I never depart; I never permit any of my people to enter the service of any other person, whoever that person may be. In my opinion, it would be highly improper; it would be unbecoming the character of a respectable family; it would introduce disorder—immorality. I regulate

my house according to what is right; you will therefore, if you please, give yourself no further trouble about this affair, sir.' . . 'Trouble! . . pardon me, madam, I do not understand you very well, madam; do you mean to say that the services of Matrena are personally indispensable to yourself?' . . 'Not at all; neither the girl nor her services are necessary to my comfort.' . . 'Well, then, why not consent to part with Matrena?' . . 'Because it does not please me; I do not wish it, that is all. I have given my orders; they are irrevocable; I send her to a village which I possess in the steppes.'

"At this word I thought a thunderbolt had struck me. The old lady addressed some words in French to the green young lady, who immediately left the room. 'I am a woman of principle; besides, you will not forget the sad state of my health, which does not allow me to bear any agitation . . You are still a young man, and I am a very old woman, and I think that this gives me the right to tender you some advice. Don't you think it would be well to begin now to think of settling, and look out for a suitable match, and marry honourably? . . Large portions are very uncommon; besides, it is never advisable to marry out of one's own rank in life; but there might be found for you some good young lady, poor as regards money, but rich in morality and good dispositions.'

"Well, sir, I looked at the old woman, I kept looking at her, without understanding a word of all this bosh; I knew she was talking about marriage, and I had a guess, too, that she had somebody she wanted to see settled in a twinkling; it was very kind of her, to be sure, and not so expensive as a legacy . . But she spoke of a village in the steppes, to which Matrena was to be dragged—perhaps at the very moment when this

woman was piping about marriage . . . Marriage! the devil . . ."

Here M. Karataëff stopped to look at me, and th[illegible] said—

"You are not married?"

"No."

"I would have said so; I would have bet that yo[u] were not . . . I was very much vexed at what the ol[d] match-maker had said. 'Madam,' I replied, 'we ar[e] making a great ado about nothing! There was no question about marriage. I merely wish to know if you will consent to part, for a fair price, with the girl Matrena, your serf.' Immediately old lady number two rose, looking daggers at me, and went up, with an appearance of solicitude, to old lady number one, who was crying, 'oh, oh!' and 'ah! ah!' as if I had been the devil in person. 'Ah! this man has overset me; oh! oh! send him away! ah! let him go immediately! oh! oh!' Number two began to rage and cry out at me, so that I could not get a word said of explanation or excuse. Number one, on her side, whined like a spoiled child with the colic, and kept saying,—'How have I deserved this? I suppose I am no longer mistress of my serfs; I am no longer free in my own house . . . Oh! ouf! ah! ah!'

"I left the room, and fled in dismay and confusion, as if I had at my back a whole legion of snakes, commanded by sorceresses.

"Perhaps," continued M. Karataëff, "you yourself judge me somewhat severely for this attachment to a girl belonging to the class of slaves. It was wrong, I confess; and I do not pretend to justify my weakness. I tell you the fact, nothing more . . . From this moment I had no rest. I tormented myself day and night, reproaching myself with having ruined the poor girl. I

figured her to myself going to herd geese on the bleak steppe, coarsely and poorly dressed, her body begrimed with smut, groaning night and morning under the frightful insults and ill-usage of a brutal starosta—a peasant with great heavy tarred boots; and a cold sweat covered me at the mere idea of these imaginary horrors.

"At last I could no longer restrain my impatience; I made inquiries about the village; I found it out; and one day I mounted my horse and rode to it. In spite of all my diligence, I did not reach it till the evening of next day. It was easy to see that nobody had expected I would play such a trick, and consequently no measures had been taken, nor any orders given, in the event of my appearance. I rode right up to the starosta's house, just as if I were a gentleman living in the neighbourhood.

When entering the yard, I saw Matrena seated under the porch, leaning her head on her hand. After the first moment of amazement, she was going to utter a cry of joy; but I made a sign to her to be quiet, and pointed to some fields lying to the west, and out of sight of the cottages. I entered the starosta's house, told him some story to blind him as to my identity, and then—the favourable moment for my project having arrived—I ran to seek Matrena. I found her easily; the poor little thing hung on my neck; she would kiss even my hands and my hair. Poor little dove, she was pale; she had grown much thinner. I said to her—'There, there, that will do; no tears, come, no tears, do you hear?' I said so to her; and myself—I was weeping like a woman. However, I was ashamed of myself. 'Matrena,' I resumed, 'tears are a poor remedy for a great evil; we must show some resolution; you must fly with me from this place; I shall

take you up on the crupper behind me; that is the only thing we can do' . . . 'What a dreadful idea! but just think, if I do anything of this kind, they will be so enraged against me . . . Oh! they will tear me in pieces!' . . . 'Eh! little stupid, who will find you out?' . . . 'They will find me out, I am sure, they will find me out!' she said in a voice full of terror; then recovering from this emotion to fall into another, she added, 'I thank you, Peoter Pétrovitch; all my life I shall never forget this mark of attachment you show me . . . but fate has sent me here;—I shall remain here' . . . 'Matrena, I thought you were a girl of character, and now you sit there half dead; you don't show the least courage.'

"She *was* a girl of character, not a doubt of it, and a great deal of character; she had a soul—a heart of gold, sir, I assure you. I returned to my proposal: 'My God! why wish to remain here? If, after flying from this you are destined to suffer, is it not the same thing? You will never be worse anywhere than in this savage hamlet. I am certain this brute of a starosta strikes and kicks you for the mere pleasure of tyrannising over you and ill-using you.'

"Matrena blushed deeply, and her teeth chattered: she was silent, and then, reflecting on the consequences of her taking this decisive course, she grew pale and said—'If I fly, I shall bring misery on all my family' . . . 'How? do you think they would persecute your family? that they would banish your relations?' . . . 'My brother would certainly be sent here in my stead, and how hard that would be!' . . . 'But your father?' . . . 'My father would not be driven away; there is only one good tailor in the whole village, and it is he' . . . 'Ah! well, even if your brother were sent here, he would not remain long; your father would constantly

remind his mistress that the poor boy was innocent; he would beg him back, and they would allow him to return' . . . 'Perhaps, perhaps, but you, you . . . you would be made responsible, you would be annoyed . . . I would rather die than be the cause of all that would happen' . . . 'As to that, that is my affair, and not yours' . . .

"She turned about and reviewed all these objections, but she could not make up her mind. I carried her away, not this time, but on a second visit . . . I arrived at night in my car; she had formed her resolution, and left with me."

"She stepped voluntarily into the car?" said I to M. Karataëff.

"Quite voluntarily. I reached my village next day at dusk, and settled her in my house. My house had eight rooms in all, and I had very few servants. My servants, I may say frankly, respected me, and were devoted to me; I believe they would not have betrayed me for all the treasures of the world. I was wonderfully happy. Matrena—the memory of the sorrows of her past life never returning except to sweeten the pleasures of her present condition—quickly gained health and freshness, and I, seeing her so pretty, so happy, so grateful for my care, became more and more attached to her . . An excellent girl she was, sir! Explain it as you best may, but I speak the truth when I tell you, that she could sing and dance and play on the guitar . . . I took care not to let her be seen by any of my neighbours; for how could I hinder them from gossiping, even though they meant no ill? But I had a friend—an intimate friend—his name was Gornostaëff Panteleï . . . Do you know him?"

"No."

"Gornostaëff was quite taken with her; he would

kiss her hand, just as if she were a fine lady—a bârynia. Gornostaëff was a very different man from me; he was a man of learning; he had read all Pouchkin, and when he talked with Matrena and me, we were all ear, all attention. He taught my little Matrena to write; it was a capital idea of his. I got her a wardrobe—one that would have made the lady of his Excellency the governor feel envious. I remember particularly a cloak of pink velvet, lined with fox's skin, and with a neat collar of the same kind of fur . . . ah! how it became her! It was made by a dressmaker of Moscow, in the neatest style, and the newest fashion.

"How pretty she looked in it! . . . She would sometimes sit motionless for whole hours, in a reverie, without ever lifting her eyes from the floor; and I, too—I would look, and look at her, and devour her with my eyes, as if I saw the fair girl for the first time. If she smiled, my whole soul thrilled with delight. Then, a little after, she would begin to laugh, and play, and dance; she would bound up, seize me, and embrace me with so much affection and ardour, that my head was like to turn; it was a very delirium of happiness. There were days when, from morning to night, my head was filled only with one idea, to contrive some pleasure for her. And, would you believe me? when I heaped her with presents, it was only for the delight of seeing her glee, her blush of joy—of seeing her try on her dresses and her ornaments, and come to me so radiant with delight, turn round and round, bend on this side and on that, smile, and at last throw herself about my neck.

"Her father Koulik, I don't know how, got wind of the affair, and would deny it fiercely when he heard it mentioned. But he came secretly to see us, his daughter and me; you may imagine how we treated

him; he shed many sweet tears, and left the house as mysteriously as he had come.

"We passed five months in this way; of course I should like it to have continued so all my life; but I am a poor unfortunate dev—. . ."

"What misfortune happened to you after that?" I asked him in a tone of sympathy, seeing he felt somewhat embarrassed on account of having spoken about himself so long.

"All my happiness went to the devil," he answered, making that deprecatory gesture of which I have already spoken, and which begins with a quick movement, and ends with the hand hanging as if it were broken at the wrist. "And it was I that was the cause of it. Matrena was very fond of long sleigh-drives; I used to take her out in the evening, at a time when there was not much chance of meeting anybody.

"Once, intending to make a pretty long excursion, we chose an evening of incomparable beauty; there had been a magnificent sunset, it was a clear frost, and not a breath of wind . . . We set out, Matrena took the reins; and I, happy, absent, and heedless, did not look where she was driving. But what did she do but take the road to Koukouëfka, the village of her mistress? I said to her, 'Where are you going, little stupid?' She looked at me over her shoulder, and smiled. I thought, she wishes for once at least to give herself the pleasure —the pleasure perfectly new to her, of playing the bravado! . . . the dear child! she is so good . . . once—one single time, in the dress, and with the equipage of nobility, to dash proudly past the very foot of the seignorial mansion, where, not long ago . . . O! it was tempting! . . . I was weak enough to allow her to go on.

"We glided on at a great rate. My beautiful Lampourdos went like the wind, the other two paced so

magnificently, and with such rapidity! We were already in sight of the cross and the roof of the church . . On the road before us was an old green close carriage, crawling along like a tortoise; behind stood a tall footman. It was the old lady herself who was taking a short drive in the evening—an unusual thing with her. I felt annoyed and uneasy at this meeting. But Matrena drove our horses right beside those of this heavy equipage—the poor coachman, having all his attention fixed on this furious troïka that was advancing like an avalanche on his animals, wished to give the road to this fabulous hippogriff that his old blind eyes took it to be; he pulled up too quickly, and overturned his mistress in a ditch. The coach window was broken; the lady shrieked, the lady's companion cried to the coachman to stop his horses; we passed them at full speed. Well, we kept on this way, but I thought to myself, there will be a noise about this; I was a great fool to allow her to go through Koukouëfka.

"Just imagine, sir, the old trot and her companion had recognized Matrena and me; she laid a complaint against me, in which she declared that a girl, a slave, who had deserted from her service, was secretly detained by the noble proprietor Karataëff. At the same time she bribed the police to make the strictest search. Two days after the accident, I had a visit from the ispravnik, the captain of police. I was well acquainted with the ispravnik, his name was Stepan Sergeitch Kouzovkin, an excellent fellow . . an ispravnik an excellent fellow! you understand me—a downright scoundrel.

"Well, Kouzovkin arrived, entered, and said to me, 'Well, Peoter Pétrovitch, what! what! . . . what is all this about? Reflect, my dear sir, the responsibility of such a thing is very great, and the laws are very

clear on the point . . .' 'No doubt, no doubt, Stepan Sergheitch, we must speak of all that bye-and-bye; but you have come a good way, you will take a little lunch first.'

"He consented; but, after satisfying his appetite, he said to me, 'Justice must take its course, Peoter Pétrovitch, you know' . . . 'Ah! yes, yes, justice! certainly, certainly . . . I hear you have a pretty black mare . . . you'll exchange her with my Lampourdos, won't you? . . . No, there is no girl called Matrena Fedorovna in my house.' . . . 'Ah! Peoter Pétrovitch, the girl is in your possession; come, we're not in Switzerland . . . As for taking your Lampourdos in exchange, I may do it; but after the other day's mishap, you know I could take him without any bartering at all, ha! ha! ha! ha!' . . In spite of this bitter sally, I contrived to get him put off for a few days.

"The old lady's rage increased daily. She said, 'Though I spend ten thousand roubles, justice shall be done me on these sucking-doves.' The secret of all this wrath, sir, was this; when she first saw me, she took the notion into her head of marrying me to the green young lady; my refusal, afterwards renewed, was what drove her to these extremes. What fancies will seize upon those rich country ladies who have nothing to do but die of ennui in their fine houses! This old woman gave me a great deal of trouble. I threw away a great deal of money, and gained nothing by it but short reprieves. I took the greatest pains to keep Matrena concealed; twenty snares were spread for me, and it is a miracle that I did not fall into one or other of them. I felt that gins were everywhere laid for me, like a poor hare.

"I fell into debt, and lost my health and peace of mind. One night I was lying in bed, and, unable to sleep,

I was thinking—Lord God! what great crime have I committed, that I should suffer thus? What must I do, if I cannot cease to love? for it is certain that it is beyond my strength. . . I heard steps in my room, it was Matrena. I had sent her away for a time to a farm I possessed about two versts from my house.

"I was terrified at seeing her, thinking that they had driven her from the farm, and I asked her if it was so. 'No,' said she, 'nobody troubled me at Boubnova; but all this cannot go on, dear Peoter Pétrovitch. It is deplorable; I cannot see you any longer in this state. My friend, you know I can never forget the fourteen months of happiness that I owe to your affection; but the time is come when duty commands me to say adieu.'

"'What do you say, foolish girl? what do you say? what do you mean by adieu? why bid me adieu? . . .' 'Calm yourself, think only of yourself, of your health; for me, I have tasted a happiness unknown to my equals; I go where my duty calls me; I go to give myself up to the justice of my mistress . . .' 'Do you know, poor little fool, that they will shut you up in a barn! You wish to kill me? you wish me to die of sorrow? . . . Come, speak . . . speak . . . raise your eyes . . . What is this new idea? . . . come, tell me . . .' 'I do not wish to be any longer a cause of misery to you—of ruin, perhaps, Peoter Pétrovitch. I know what you are suffering; I see it . . .' 'Unfortunate! foolish girl! your mistress! your mistress! how? . . . Oh! poor fool, you don't know, poor fool! . . .'"

Peoter Pétrovitch sobbed, and then hurried to the conclusion of his story.

"What will you think of all this, now?" he resumed, striking the table with his fist, and forcing himself to knit his brows, while the obstinate tears coursed down

his inflamed cheeks. "The poor girl went and delivered herself up; she fled on foot that very night; she went to the door of the lady, and gave herself up . . ."

"Horses are ready, gentlemen!" said the postmaster, with a sonorous gravity.

We rose, my tea-table companion and I.

"And what became of this poor Matrena?" I said.

M. Karataëff answered only by his usual gesture, susceptible of such an infinite variety of interpretations.

A year elapsed, and business called me to Moscow. The day after my arrival, chance led me to enter, before dinner, a café of a singularly original and Muscovian character, about a hundred paces from a line of shops, very well known to all sportsmen in this part of the empire. In the billiard-room, through clouds of tobacco-smoke, could be seen, by momentary glimpses, flushed countenances, moustaches, long beards, Hungarian coats in the ancient fashion, and Sviatoslavskis* of the newest modes. Some lean, dry old men, in modest surtouts, were engaged in reading the newspapers. Waiters circulated through the room with surprising speed—their server and white napkin in their hands, the sound of their steps deadened by the thick green carpets. Solid Russian merchants were sipping their tea with an enviable collectedness. I did not enter. Suddenly there appeared from the billiard-room a man with his long hair in disorder, and not very steady on his legs. He stopped about three paces from me, thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, and stared vaguely about him.

"Good-day, Peoter Pétrovitch . . . how are you?"

M. Karataëff was just going to throw himself on my

* A fashion which, if we are to judge by the name, must have descended from the time of Sviatoslaff, and the half-fabulous period of Russian history.

neck, but he restrained himself; and led me, not without some little difficulty, into a small private room.

"Sit down there, there," he said, bustling about to get me installed in a comfortable arm-chair; "there you will feel all right. Waiter! some beer! . . . no, champagne! . . . Ah! I did not expect to see you . . . Have you been long in town? At last God has been so good as to allow me to see the man . . ."

"You remember me, do you?"

"How? Remember you . . . remember you! . . . But the time has gone by quickly."

"And how are you getting on in Moscow, dear Peoter Pétrovitch?"

"O! I live as you see. Pleasant life here; excellent people. Here I have found peace."

At this word peace, he sighed deeply, and raised his eyes.

"You have obtained an appointment?"

"No, not yet. But I expect one shortly. But, why care about the service? It is the men . . . the men, that is the main thing. What men, ah! what good fellows I have become acquainted with since I came here! ah! . . ."

The waiter entered, and placed a bottle of champagne and two glasses on the table.

"Now, here is a capital fellow . . . Eh! Vassia, are you not a capital fellow? Your health, Vassia!"

The waiter bowed, smiled, and left the room.

"Yes, we have excellent fellows here," continued Peoter Pétrovitch, with exultation, "men full of feeling, full of soul . . . Would you like me to introduce you to some thirty of them? they are such jolly fellows . . . They will all be delighted . . . I assure you . . . I shall tell them . . . Alas! Babroff is dead; that was a great loss!"

"What Babroff do you mean?"

"Serg Babroff, Serg himself . . . Ah! that was a man! Do you know, sir, that he received me—me, rough ignorant stepniak?"

"M. Babroff showed you some civilities?"

"What? civilities! he received me into his own house . . . and I have lost him . . . And Panteleï Gornostaëff is dead too! ah! sir, they are all dead, all!"

"You have resided all this year in Moscow? you did not pay a visit to your estate?"

"My estate? . . . It is sold."

"Sold?"

"Sold by auction . . . You should have bought it; you missed a chance."

"And how do you live now?"

"Ah! I shall not die of hunger, God is here! I have no money, but I have friends. And what is money? dirt! what is gold? dirt! dirt!"

He curled his lip, fumbled in his pocket, and showed me in the hollow of his hand two twopenny pieces and a sixpenny piece. "What is that? eh! mere dirt!" (And he flung them on the floor.) "But, come, tell me, have you read Poléjaëff?" *

"Yes, I have read him."

"And have you seen Motchâloff in Hamlet?"

"No, I have not seen him."

"You havn't seen him? You havn't seen Motchâloff in Hamlet?" . . . (His countenance grew pale, his eye became haggard, his lip trembled convulsively.) "Ah! Motchâloff, Motchâloff . . . Listen."

And he declaimed in a hollow cavernous voice the famous soliloquy:

"To die—to sleep, no more . . . ."

And interrupting himself, as if for the purpose of commenting on the lines of the great English dramatist,

* The author of a translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

which he no doubt applied to himself, he muttered several times—"To sleep, to sleep!"

"Come, tell me, pray" . . . I began, wishing not to hear any more about Hamlet; but he had resumed with an eloquence full of fire:

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time?"

He then dropped his head on the table, and began to talk without knowing what he was saying. Then the fire blazed up again:

A little month; or ere their shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father's body.

He raised his glass to his lips; he did not drink, but cried—

"For Hecuba!
"What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?"

Karataëff let his glass fall, and grasped his head with his hands. I knew what was passing in his mind.

"But what am I thinking of? If any one recalls the past, let an eye be taken from him. That is a good proverb, is it not?" he added laughing . . "Your health, sir!"

The waiter entered with a new glass.

"You are going to stay in Moscow?" I inquired; "you have definitively resolved to live here?"

"I shall die in Moscow . ."

"Karataëff!" shouted some one from the next room, "Karataëff! where are you! come here! dear old fellow!"

"They are calling me in there," he said, rising with difficulty from his chair; "I shan't say good bye; come and see me if you can: I stay in . ."

But next day, unforeseen circumstances compelled me to leave Moscow, and since that night at the café, I have never seen Peoter Pétrovitch Karataëff.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ASSIGNATION.—VILLAGE COURTSHIP.

One day about the middle of September, I was in the field, and feeling fatigued, I sat down in a birch copse. Showers of drizzling rain, alternating with bright sunshine, had fallen since morning; the weather, in fact, was somewhat unsettled, and the barometer pointed to *variable*. The sky was sometimes wholly overcast with white fleecy clouds; sometimes, for a few seconds, large openings showed themselves in them, through which the blue sky appeared; and then a cloud flying along, completely obscured the lovely azure. . . .

A thick moss, which covered the roots of the trees, furnished me with a delicious couch, with a gentle slope; seated on which I feasted my eyes and ears . . . with what? you will ask. With everything, and yet with nothing; with nothing, if you wish to amuse yourself at my expense. The leaves made above my head a hardly perceptible noise. Well! I noticed that, listening to this airy rustling, you could tell by the sound alone what season it was, and in what month of the year you had heard it before.

It was not the joyous quiver of the branches, loaded with sap, creeping audibly, as it were, to the tender leaves in early spring; nor the gently shivering noise, the long-drawn whispering and twittering of summer,

nor was it like the cold, chilly shudder which sighs through the trees at the end of autumn; it was a gentle, low, rustling hum, heard as if in sleep. The action of the wind could hardly be perceived moving the tops of the trees; and the middle of the copse, from which the vapour that arose from the newly fallen rain was mounting, momently changed its appearance as the sun shone upon it, or was hid behind the clouds. If the sun broke through, the atmosphere appeared as if enchanted, and all nature smiled; the tall, tapering stems of the birches, of an ashy paleness, which grew at small distances from each other, assumed all at once a tender and glossy brightness, as of satin; the leaves, already tinged with the sun-light, shone like virgin gold, and the beautiful stalks of the curled fern, shaded with the autumnal tints, resembling ripe grapes hanging on the vine, shot forth above the grass, and confused the eye with the manifold interlacings of their long branches. If clouds again dimmed the sky, they assumed in a little a bluish tint; their former lively colours suddenly disappeared; the birch trunks alone remained white; but it was pale, dead-like, and lustreless—a colour resembling newly fallen snow, upon which the rays of the winter's sun had not yet glinted; and from the clouds falls stealthily, drop by drop, a light shower, or descend in a noiseless fall of the finest rain.

The foliage of the birch trees was still almost entirely green, although in some places sere and pale; you could only find here and there some leaves wholly red or yellow, although they did not appear so glittering in the sunlight, when the rays suddenly shot among them athwart the sieve-like interlacings of the little branches on which the shower was falling. You could not hear the carol of a single bird; they had all retired into their coverts, their mysterious and quiet

lurking-places, except the tom-tit, which from time to time piped forth its little note, like the tinkle of a steel bell.

Before arriving at the birch copse, I was obliged to go through a little grove of tall aspens. I confess I don't like the aspen, nor do I admire either its violet bark or its greyish-green leafage, which shoots high into the air, and spreads itself abroad like a broken fan. I do not love the incessant shiver of its little round leaf, but slenderly attached to the long shooting branches. The tree is beautiful only at certain times of the day, —when, rearing itself aloft in a lonely place in the midst of copse, it arrests the rays of the setting sun; it sparkles and shivers then from root to summit, bathed in a yellowish-red glimmer. It pleases me still more when, in a clear breezy day, it shivers and sighs in the blue sky; when each leaf stretching out horizontally, seems to be broken off by the wind, and carried fluttering to a distance. But, in general, I do not love the tree; I never stop under its shade to rest myself. I gained the birch copse; there I made choice of a tree with thick foliage, under which I screened myself very conveniently from the rain, and after having fully enjoyed all the comforts of my shelter, I fell asleep, while passing through my fingers the long velvety ears of Diana, and tasted in my couch of silky moss, that sound, refreshing, and healthful sleep which the true sportsman only knows.

I rose, and was going to resume my sport, when I was struck by seeing at a little distance from the thicket in which I was, a human form, sitting motionless upon a bank; it was a young village girl. She was seated about twenty yards from me in a pensive attitude, her head hanging on her bosom, and her hands upon her knees. Her neat white dress buttoned up to her throat

fell in graceful soft folds round her light form; a cape trimmed with large glass beads of a yellow colour covered her shoulders and bosom. She was pretty; her thick fair hair, dressed with great neatness, fell in two large loops put up neatly behind the ear; across her ivory forehead passed a scarlet fillet; the rest of her sweet face glowed with that pure vermeil tint which is only found in the most beautiful carnations.

I could not see the colour of her eyes, as she kept her head hanging down; but I could observe her fine eyebrows, drawn as if with the delicate pencil of an artist, above her long moist eyelashes; one of her cheeks was gemmed with a half dry tear, and another had trickled down almost to her pale lips. The contour of her head was graceful, exceedingly graceful; her nose was a little too large, and slightly rounded at the end; but had it not been so, I am convinced that it would not have been so becoming. The greatest charm in this girl lay in her expression—so simple—so sweet, her modest and chaste unconsciousness of her own beauty.

It was evident that she was waiting for somebody; a dull crackling sound was heard in the copse; the girl raised her head, and in the dim shade of the wood, I could see the quick fire of her large brilliant eyes that gleamed for a moment like the clear bright glance of a gazelle. She was all eye and ear in the direction of the place from which she thought the noise had come; then she sighed, resumed her listless attitude, let her head again fall upon her bosom, and began to make a selection of the wild flowers which she had gathered. Her eyelids reddened, her lips assumed a somewhat bitter expression, and a fresh tear fell from the ends of her long silken eyelashes upon her cheek, where it trickled down a bright diamond, over her beautiful cheeks and dimpled chin.

The poor young woman had now remained almost an hour beneath the large tree, where doubtless she had an assignation with some one. From time to time she crossed her hands upon her knees and listened with drooping head . . Again something stirred in the brake; she shivered. The noise this time increased, came nearer and nearer . . at last you could hear the footsteps, quick and active, of a person approaching. She sat upright, and at the same time appeared afraid; her face was flushed; her fixed gaze trembled with fear, and was at the same time lighted up with hope. Through the trees the form of a man was distinguishable. She looked up, blushed, smiled with joy and happiness, made a motion as if she were going to rise, sunk down again, grew pale, trembled, and showed at last a face betokening a mind ill at ease, and almost beseeching, to the man who was approaching her.

I looked with some curiosity upon the gallant whom she had been so long waiting for. I confess that he did not make upon me a favourable impression. He seemed, from his appearance, to be a valet, probably a favourite of some rich young bârin. His dress showed some pretensions to good taste, and he wore it with an air of careless vanity. He had on a little olive-coloured frock-coat, very likely some cast-off garment of his master's, buttoned up to the chin; a narrow cravat of violet-coloured velvet surrounded his neck, and upon his head a velvet cap trimmed with gold lace, which was brought down over his eyes. The collar of his shirt, well stiffened with starch, made indentations in his cheeks, and almost cut his ears; his sleeve ruffles, which were never intended for him, refused to cover his red, frosty hands and coarsely formed fingers, ornamented with gold and silver rings, in which were set cornelians and

turquoises. His ruddy, fresh-coloured, and impudent face was one of that description which almost always, I regret to say, raises the envy of the men, and invariably pleases the women.

The fellow, affecting the manners of a man of fashion, tried to throw into his coarse features a scornful and contemptuous air; he kept his light grey eyes half-open, though they were little enough naturally; he knit his brows, drew down the corners of his mouth; yawned almost incessantly, and had a carriage which was intended to be negligée, but which was in reality, awkward; he handled, as if for the purpose of giving it a graceful curl, the yellow stubble on his upper lip, which gave promise of a moustache; in short, he was a booby —a piece of inflated affectation. He had begun to give himself those airs at a distance, the moment he came in sight of the girl. He then began to walk in a dignified way, and strut like a peacock, when approaching her; then he stopped, raised his shoulders, thrust his hands into the pockets of his coat, and, scarcely deigning to honour the village girl with a look, seated himself by her side with an air of superiority, as if condescending to unbend a little from his high dignity. The vacant look from his half shut eyes wandered up and down carelessly, whilst he said to the girl—

"Well, have you been long here?" He threw one leg over another, and yawned.

The girl, somewhat startled, did not at once reply.

"Yes, a long time, Victor Alexandrytch," said she at last, in a scarcely perceptible whisper.

"Ah!" (He took off his cap, passed his hand through his hair, which was thick, and done up in curls, and after looking carelessly round, put on his cap again with a dignified air.) "And I had quite forgot! And then consider the rain." (He yawned

again.) "We have so much to do, one can't get through all one's work . . and then there's this one and the other one grumbling at your heels. We leave for town to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" said the girl, looking at him with a wild and scared expression.

"Yes, to-morrow. Well, well! I beg you," said he hastily, and in a dry tone, seeing that she was trembling all over, and that her head was hanging down; "I beg you, Akoulina, not to cry; you know I can't bear that sort of thing." (And he raised his eye-brows, and tapped his flat nose.) "Stop, or I shall go away at once. How stupid you are to cry and whine at the least thing I say."

"Well, no, no, I won't cry," said the poor girl quickly, stifling her tears. "So you go away to-morrow?" added she after a pause. "When will God allow me to see you again, Victor Alexandrytch?"

"We'll come back, certainly, we'll come back. If not next year, the year after. It seems that the bârin wishes to get an appointment in a government office in St. Petersburg," added he, mincing the last words, and speaking through his nose. "But perhaps we shall go and travel in foreign countries."

"You will forget me, Victor Alexandrytch," said Akoulina sadly.

"Eh? no; why, I shall not forget you, only don't be a fool, and listen to your father. I say I'll not forget you, no, no;" (whereupon the fop stretched his arms, and yawned again.)

"Don't forget me, Victor Alexandrytch," she resumed in a beseeching tone. "Why did I love you? it was well for you . . . You tell me to listen to my father, Victor Alexandrytch . . . How can I obey? . . . How can my father . . ."

"Eh? well, what?" (These three words issued as

if from the bottom of his stomach; he was lying on his back with his hands under his head.)

"But, but, Victor Alexandrytch, you know well.". .

She stopped. Victor played with his watch-chain.

"Come now, Akoulina, don't be foolish," said the gallant at last, "don't say any more foolish things. I only wish your good. It is true you are not a foolish girl, nor altogether a peasant, one can easily see that; and your mother, she has not always been a peasant. But then you are a girl of no education, and so you should listen to me."

"Oh, dear! Victor Alexandrytch."

"Bah, bah! how foolish you are, my dear girl, what can alarm you in all that? What have you got there? . . . flowers?" added he, sitting closer to her.

"Yes, flowers," replied Akoulina mournfully; "I gathered some milfoil for myself," pursued she, arranging them a little; "they are very good for the calves. I have some plantain too, some bidents . . . to cure scrofula. But look at this curious flower, I never saw such a plant as that, never one with such a shape. Here are some germanders . . . But see what I've got for you." added she, drawing from the heap of yellow bidents a little bunch of pretty wild corn-centauries, tied round with a blade of grass; "will you take them?"

Victor stretched out his hand with an effort, took the bouquet, passed it carelessly over his face several times, and commenced fingering the corn-centauries with his eyes on the trees before him. Akoulina on the other hand looked at him . . . In the pitiful look of this poor creature I could read so tender a devotion, such pious resignation, such true heartfelt love. I could easily see that through fear of him she dared not shed a tear; she was taking farewell of him; and for the last time before a long separation, she rejoiced to see him, to be near him . . . And he, he was lying his whole

length on the grass, like a stupid Oriental, condescending to allow her to adore him, with a magnanimous patience and pity for her weakness. I cannot deny that I viewed with indignation his ruddy countenance, in which, through a scornful coolness which played on his face, gleamed the satisfied self-esteem of the hardened seducer, the servile and abject imitator of the rich—of a man, in short, who had not a single virtue to redeem his vices.

Akoulina looked beautiful at this moment, her whole soul opened herself to him in confidence, her whole joy was centered in him, she delighted in his very presence. . . And he . . he let his bouquet fall upon the grass, drew from a fancy pocket in his frock coat a little round glass, set in burnished copper, and put it to his right eye; but, in spite of all the efforts he could make by pursing up his eyebrows, wrinkling his cheek—the operation being aided by a natural projection in his nose, the glass escaped from its position, and fell into his hand.

"What's that you have there?" asked Akoulina with an astonished air.

"An eyeglass," replied Victor, in a consequential tone.

"What is the use of it?"

"To enable one to see better."

"Allow me to try it."

Victor made a sly grimace, but he put it into her hand, saying drily—

"Don't let it fall!"

"No fear, I am not so careless" (she put it to her eye) "I do not see at all," she added.

"Shut your eye then, shut your eye," said he in the tone of a master discontented with his pupil. (She shut the eye before which she held the eye-glass). "Not that

eye, the other one, stupid! The other, the other!" cried he, and took the glass from her, without giving her time to correct her mistake.

Akoulina reddened, checked her inclination to laugh, and turning her head, said—

"One can see clearly that such things are not for us——"

"For village girls? no, they don't need such things."

The poor Akoulina made no answer, but heaved a deep sigh.

"Ah! Victor Alexandrytch, how sorry we shall be when you are away," she resumed.

Victor wiped his glass, and, putting it in his pocket, replied—

"Ah! yes, I can well believe you; it will be hard for you at first," (he patted her gently on the shoulder in a patronising way; she took an affectionate grasp of the dear hand, and kissed it with a kind of fearful veneration). "Yes, yes, I know quite well that you are a nice girl," replied he in the voice of a puppy filled with morbid self-love; "but what can I do? Judge yourself, my master and myself can't remain here; look you, the winter is coming on, and the country, in the winter season, you must allow, is detestable. In the winter, hurrah for St. Petersburg! there one sees such wonderful sights as a poor silly girl like you can't imagine, even in your brightest dreams. What houses! what streets! what beautifully dressed people! Besides *civilation*, yes, an astonishing degree of *civilation*, you see . . ."

Akoulina was all attention during this description of St. Petersburg; she held her mouth open like the little children when they are told a story about Cockaigne, or the kingdom of the fairies.

"But," added he, stretching himself at full

length on the grass, and crushing to pieces the forgotten bouquet, "what a fool I have been all this while, telling you about things you don't understand!".

"Why, Victor Alexandrytch? I understand them perfectly well."

"You? Ho! ho! what a deal you must think of yourself."

Akoulina bit her lips.

"You never spoke to me in that manner before, Victor Alexandrytch," she whispered softly, without raising her eyes.

"Before! before! you think so? before!" replied he peevishly.

The pair ceased talking.

"It is time, however, that I was home," muttered the gallant Victor; and he half raised himself and leaned on his elbow.

"Wait a little longer," said Akoulina in an imploring tone.

"For what? I have already bid you farewell" . . .

"Wait," replied Akoulina.

Victor stretched himself and began to whistle with his eyes half shut. Akoulina, for a few minutes, did not turn her eyes to his. I could easily see that she gradually became agitated: the rosy tint fled from her lips, she grew pale and red by turns . . . her heart seemed to have some load on it.

"Victor Alexandrytch," said she at last in a broken voice, "it is a great sin of you—yes, a great sin of you —Victor Alexandrytch, Heaven is my witness."

"What is a sin? What are you saying?" replied he with a frown.

He sat upright, and turned his head towards her.

"Yes, a sin, Victor Alexandrytch. You should whisper a word of hope to me when we are going to part.

What! you have not a word to say to me—not one little kind word for me—a poor, heart-broken, forlorn girl" . . .

"What do you want me to say?"

"What do I know? you can speak well enough when you choose, Victor Alexandrytch. You are going away, and yet you'll say nothing? . . . Have I deserved such treatment?"

"How odd you are! am I nobody?"

"A little word is soon said."

"Come, you keep always piping on one tune just now," said he harshly, standing up.

"Don't be angry with me, Victor Alexandrytch," she said quickly, and checking a rising sob.

"I am not angry, but you are quite unbearable. What do you want? You know well that I can't marry you; I haven't the means . . . Well, what is it? tell me, what do you want?"

He looked as if he expected a speedy reply.

"Have I said anything amiss? I want nothing, nothing," replied she in a faltering voice, scarcely venturing to hold out her trembling arms to him; "but in bidding me farewell, you should at least say one word. . ."

The tears fell from her eyes in torrents.

"Ah! here we are again! There was not enough rain in the morning; make a good cry of it," said Victor coldly, giving his head a good shake to bring his cap well over his eyes.

"I don't want anything," she continued, sobbing and hiding her face with her hands; "but how shall I face my family? What will be my position there, me, the poor forlorn one? They will give me to some clodhopper who won't love me. Ah! my poor head, unhappy that I am!" . . .

"That's the style, pipe away, a note higher!" muttered Victor, with difficulty curbing his impatience.

"Could he not have said to me one word—only one word: 'My Akoulina, I'" . . .

The anguish which was working in her bosom did not allow her to finish what she was going to say; she fell upon her face on the grass, and gave free vent to her grief; the violent and convulsive motion of her whole body showed her mental agitation; her head and shoulders heaved violently; the deep and bitter feelings which had been so long pent up now broke forth in uncontrollable sorrow. Victor stood and looked at her for some time; her passionate grief did not move him in the slightest degree; he was only impatient to be gone; at last he shrugged his shoulders, wheeled about, and walked off at a great pace.

After a few moments she became calmer. She raised her head, rose quickly, and looked after him; she made a motion as if she would run after him, but her limbs refused to obey her, and she sank upon her knees . . . Deeply moved at her grief, I went to her assistance; but the poor young woman, on seeing me, rose up, and fetching a deep sigh, disappeared amongst the trees, leaving all her flowers and herbs lying trampled on the ground, except some corn-centauries.

Not seeing her again, I stooped down, took up the bouquet of corn-centauries, which I bound round with a blade of germander, and regained the road. The sun was already low down in the horizon, in a clear sky—the tints of his rays paled down till they became almost cold; there was no brilliancy in them; they gave but a pale watery light. It was only half an hour to nightfall, and the western horizon held only a few rose-tinted streaks of clouds.

I stopped twice or thrice; my heart was big with

that sympathetic sadness which comes to us so easily from nature . . Beneath the melancholy beauty which is fading and losing its summer splendours, you shudder as if you felt in anticipation the approaching winter. A raven, which was beating the air with his powerful wings, swooped down and eyed me askance, flapped his wings with all his might, saluted me with an energetic croak, and then sailed away in defiance into the gloom of the forest. An immense flock of pigeons rose at a distance from some barns, formed into detached columns, flew down and disappeared in the fields. These are certain indications of autumn.

I got home, and enjoyed excellent sleep, as I always do . . But it was a long time before I got the image of the poor Akoulina out of my mind; and the corn-centauries, long since faded, with the germanders surrounding them, still remain in my cabinet.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HIGHER PROVINCIAL SOCIETY—A RUSSIAN *HAMLET.*

WHILE on a sporting tour, I received an invitation to dinner from a gentleman of my acquaintance, Alexander Mikhaïlytch, a rich landed proprietor, whose principal village was about four miles distance from the hamlet in which I had taken up my temporary residence. I of course put on my best coat to do honour to the kindness of Alexander Mikhaïlytch. The invitation said, *six o'clock;* I arrived at five, and found already there a large number of the nobility of the country, some in uniform, others in coats of a more or less recent fashion, others dressed as their imagination or a rather equivocal taste had dictated.

My host received me warmly, but immediately hurried to the antechamber. He was expecting a high official dignitary, and betrayed an agitation which was in singular contrast with his independent position, and his condition as a man of wealth. Alexander Mikhaïlytch had never married; I may even venture to say, he had never even thought of it. He was not fond of women, and if his parties did not consist exclusively of men, which would have been decidedly dull, the bachelors were pretty certain to be in a large majority. His establishment was magnificent; he had enlarged and

furnished splendidly the seignorial mansion of his ancestors; he spent annually fifteen thousand roubles on wine . . . and, in short, was looked up to as one of the first people in this part of the country. Alexander Mikhaïlytch had only been a very short time in the service, and thus had no official title.

The master of the house continued to wait in the antechamber, and I began to walk through the apartments. Almost all the guests were entirely unknown to me. About twenty people were already engaged at cards. Among these fanatics for play, were two military gentlemen of somewhat distinguished appearance, but rather decayed; they had been long in the service. One could distinguish, too, several civil functionaries in high stiff cravats, with moustaches carefully dyed, such as figure only on the faces of well-meaning people. These well-meaning persons handled their cards in a grave fashion, keeping their heads well drawn back and erect, and their eyes moving constantly round the circle of gentlemen who had gathered about the table to observe the game. They talked in a mild, clear voice, cast benignant smiles on all sides, held their cards against their shirt-breast, when playing a trump, far from striking violently on the table, they deposited their card softly on the others, and on taking up their tricks, made a light apologetic movement with their hand, which indicated an unusual politeness and urbanity of soul.

The rest of the guests stood or sat in groups near the doors and windows. A country gentleman of a certain—or rather of an uncertain age—stood alone in a corner; he trembled all over, blushed continually, and kept twirling, in painful embarrassment, his watch-chain, with a doubtful expression in his face, which indicated at the same time a wish that somebody

would be kind enough to speak to him, and a fear lest he should be accosted; no one paid any attention to him. Several gentlemen in clumsy coats and checked trousers, of the cut of the immortal Muscovian tailor, Firs Kleovkin, were engaged in a very animated discussion. A young man of some twenty years of age, very fair, and very short-sighted, dressed in black from head to foot, although evidently not at his ease, cast on these provincials a faint smile of contempt . .

I was beginning to feel bored, when I was accosted by a gentleman of the name of Voïnitzyn, a young man who had passed through the University without carrying away the least stain of knowledge on the primeval purity of his young and innocent soul, and who lived with Alexander Mikhaïlytch in some quality or other—I cannot say what. But I know I am right when I say that he was a good shot, and a capital dog-trainer. I had known him at Moscow. He was one of those students who went by the name of *posts*, from their responding at the examinations only by an absolute silence to every question of the professors. These gentlemen were also called *whiskers*, it having been observed that in respect to these ornaments of the face, they were much more highly endowed than the other students.

The thing went on in this way at the University. A name is called, let us suppose Voïnitzyn. Voïnitzyn, who up to this moment has been sitting motionless and erect on one of the benches, the perspiration breaking all over his body, casting his eyes slowly over the assembly or on the roof, though it was plain that the inward gaze—if there was any—was turned in a very different direction, immediately rises, buttons his coat up to the chin, and walks up sideways to the table of the examiners. "Be good enough, sir, to take a

ticket," says one of the professors very graciously. Voïnitzyn stretches out his hand, and scatters the tickets over the table. "You are not asked to select; you are requested to take one," remarks an old gentleman in a somewhat dry voice. This is a professor of another faculty; he stares at the unfortunate post, becomes angry at the figure he is making, and takes a dislike to him at once. Voïnitzyn obeys, takes a ticket, shows its number to the professor, and takes a seat near the window, to wait till he is called. During this short respite and time for meditation, wisely granted to the young gentleman who is about to succeed his fellow-student before the learned professors, Voïnitzyn's eyes never wander from the ticket.

His turn comes at last; his predecessor has left the table; the professor has said, "You may go; you have done *well*," or "*very well*," as the case may be. Voïnitzyn is called, he rises and advances with a firm step; and now he stands before his judges.

"Read your ticket." Voïnitzyn raises the ticket with both hands to the point of his nose, as if his arms were moved by springs; reads it slowly and with scrupulous care to the end, and then allows his arms to fall gradually to his side, holding the ticket between two fingers of his right hand. "Very good! go on, speak," says the professor who called him up, in a careless nasal tone. Voïnitzyn preserves a sepulchral silence. "Why do you not go on?" Voïnitzyn stands as if he were petrified. The old professor of the other faculty fidgets about in his chair, and then comes out with, "Well, say something at least." Complete silence and immobility. His fellow-students direct their gaze stedfastly to the back of his neck, lately trimmed by some fashionable barber. At the same time they observe that the eyes of the little old man seem on the point of jumping out

of his head; by this time he has a decided detestation of Voïnitzyn. "This is too bad!" says another examiner, "Why don't you speak? . . . Is it because you know nothing about the subject, eh? Well! do us the pleasure of saying as much!" . . . "Allow me to take another ticket," stammers the unhappy spoon, in a *basso profondo* voice. The professors look at each other, and make a heroic effort to preserve their gravity; the least laugh from them would produce a scandalous uproar among the students. "Well! take one," says the president of the board. Voïnitzyn takes a new ticket, again passes twenty minutes at the window with the ticket at his nose, and again returns to the table, where he stands like the trunk of a dead tree, motionless and mute. The little old fellow gives evidence, this time, of a strong desire to swallow him at a mouthful.

At last he is requested to retire, and a zero is put against his name. You would fancy that the poor post would lose no time in rushing out of the room . . . nothing of the kind; he takes his old seat on the bench; and, on leaving the class-room at the conclusion of the examination, remarks to some of his fellow-students, "Plaguy old fogies! These examinations are a bore, are they not? and just to think that it will be quite as warm work to-morrow!" He walks the town the rest of the day, deploring his want of *self-possession*. He returns to his rooms tired out, goes to bed, sleeps like a dormouse, rises next morning, breakfasts, returns to the university without having even thought of opening a book, and passes his examinations with the same success, as little disconcerted as he was on the previous day.

The M. Voïnitzyn who addressed me in the saloon was a post of the time when I was myself a student. But

he showed no reluctance in speaking about old university stories. We talked about Moscow and the field.

Suddenly he broke off from the subject of dogs, and whispered in my ear—

"Would you like me to introduce you to the cleverest man in the country?"

"I should be happy."

Voïnitzyn led me up to a little man with moustaches, dressed in a coat of the colour of Spanish tobacco, and a striped cravat. His bilious complexion, flexible features, dark lively eyes, and keen look, gave evidence of a character sparkling with wit and malice. Beside him stood a country gentleman, large, flabby, mild-looking, and blind of one eye. He persisted in laughing before the point of his companion's story, and twisting his body about in an ecstasy of delight.

Voïnitzyn introduced me to Pëoter Petrovitch Lupikhin, vulcan of bon mots and professional wit. We exchanged some of the common phrases consecrated by the usages of polite society.

"Allow me to present to you my most intimate friend," said Lupikhin with a free, rather flippant air, taking the mild-looking gentleman by the hand. "Don't be hiding behind me, Kirill Selifanitch, we are not going to kill you . . . This is one of my dearest friends," he pursued, while Kirill Selifanitch bowed as if he were in danger of a rupture; "he is an excellent fellow, a gentleman every inch of him. He enjoyed admirable health up to his fiftieth year, and then finding his intellect wonderfully developed, and foreseeing he was destined to a long old age, he set about cogitating some plan for preserving his sight; at the end of four-and-twenty hours he squinted; three days after, he had lost an eye. From that time he constituted himself physician to his serfs; he devotes himself particularly to their

eyes, and the success is constantly the same. Devoted peasants! eh?"

"Ah! what a . . ." stammered Kirill Selifanitch, breaking into a roar of laughter.

"My dear friend, I advise you never to leave unfinished what you have got to say," resumed Lupikhin; "consider you may have the honours of a magistracy conferred upon you, indeed you may be quite sure of that in less than three months; put that down in your note-book . . . I have not a doubt but that you will be proposed; but you should always be able, at least, to express in some way or other the ideas of other people . . . Suppose now you were made governor of the district, and paid a visit to the judges in their court. 'Hallo! what's the matter? the judge is stuttering?' Somebody suggests that this is the sign of an attack of paralysis. 'Come, quick, quick,' you answer of course, 'take him away and have him bled.'"

The mild-looking individual burst into a roar, but suddenly stopped, out of breath, and holding his sides.

"You see, sir, he laughs heartily," resumed Lupikhin, casting a malicious side-glance at the overgrown paunch of Kirill Selifanitch; "he laughs heartily, the excellent old gentleman, and why shouldn't he? He is fat and well-conditioned, fresh and eupeptic, no children, no mortgages, his own physician as well as his serfs', and has a wife divinely stupid."

Kirill Selifanitch turned his head away, and pretended not to have heard the last words distinctly.

The wit suddenly changed the subject.

"I am joking. Ah! by the way, you would hear that my wife ran away the other day with the district-surveyor . . . What! you didn't hear of it? that is odd; she had all the honours, upon my word, of a

regular and systematic elopement. I am quite proud, you see, of the merits of my wife; and then she went to work in such an ingenious way, she took with her all she could—but she left me a very reasonable letter: 'Dear Peoter Petrovitch—Carried away by an unconquerable passion, I leave your roof with the friend of my heart; pardon me;' and so on it goes in the usual style of high romance. The surveyor had two great advantages over me, she said, and I assure you I was not aware of them till after the retreat . . . He took great care of his nails, and wore straps to his trousers. You are surprised, I suppose, at my coolness, and careless way of speaking about the thing . . . Ah! heavens! we stepniaks can look a fact in the face . . . But let us go a little aside, sir, we must not talk in this way in the presence of his honour the magistrate that is to be."

He took my arm, and we went into the recess of a window.

"I have the reputation here of a joke-mill," he said to me, in the course of conversation, "but that is pure nonsense. I am merely an irritated man, who consoles himself with despising everybody. I get on very well in this way. And why should I be discreet and polite? What I have not isn't the value of a straw in my eyes. I have no wishes, no ambition; I am malicious . . . no doubt, what of it? The malicious person has the advantage of not needing wit. How refreshing it is to the blood, you can't understand. Just look at our host, now. He has taken out his watch fifty times the last five minutes; he is frowning—no, it is a smile; he perspires doing nothing; he struts about like a peacock, and airs all his fine manners—and, in the meantime, his guests are dying of hunger. A *dignitary* is expected—a dignitary! a rare phenomenon! . . ."

And Lupikhin burst into a hissing, creaking laugh, in which he utterly failed to gain my sympathy.

"Pity there is no lady of the house! A bachelor's dinner is . . . Look," he cried all of a sudden, "there is Prince Kozelski—that stout gentleman with the beard, in yellow trousers. You can see at once he has travelled in the west . . . and he always comes late. Between you and me, he is as dull as a door-nail. I wish you could see the condescending manner he assumes when he speaks to us poor provincials, with what an air of kindness he deigns to smile on our wives and daughters! He can't endure me . . . I must go and speak to him."

And Lupikhin ran up to the prince, made him a sarcastic bow, and returned to me.

"Ah! there is one of my most intimate enemies—that immense mass of flesh, that sun-burnt face, with the large round brush on his head, in place of hair—that clumsy fellow, who keeps behind every other body, and rubs himself against the wall, throwing his eyes round on every side like a wolf. I sold him a horse worth a thousand for four hundred roubles. I wanted the money, and ever since, he thinks he has a right, the blockhead! to treat me as he likes, without ceremony. He is so stupid, especially before breakfast, or after dinner; if you bid him good-day, your answer will most likely be, 'What do you say?' . . . Ah! here comes a general—a civilian general—a general without a division. He has a beet-root sugar manufactory, and a daughter as stupid as himself, with the remarkable property of always having a cold . . . Oh! oh! Mr. Architect here! bravo! The architect—there he is, that German in moustaches; he knows nothing of architecture—no matter for that, he pockets a capital income, and puts as many pillars as he can crowd together in front of the

houses of the nobles, who look upon themselves as the pillars of the country."

A buzz ran round the room; the official dignitary had just made his appearance in the antechamber. The hum of conversation suddenly fell into a low soft whisper. Two persons alone continued talking as loud as ever—Lupikhin and the Prince Kozelski. The great man entered the room. All hearts fly to meet him,—at least all the chairs creaked, and everybody rose. The fat country-gentleman plunged his chin into his cravat as a sign of his profound veneration and respect.

The great man distributed right and left certain gracious phrases—pronounced through his nose—all beginning with the expletive *a, a.* He cast a dissatisfied look at Kozelski's beard, and presented the fore-finger of his left hand to the civilian general to kiss. After a few minutes employed by the high functionary in expressing five or six times his delight at not having kept us waiting, the guests passed into the dining-room, the court cards leading the way, and the smaller ones bringing up the rear.

It will be of course understood that the gentleman who had been keeping everybody starving for the last two hours occupied the upper end of the table, between the retired general and the lord-marshal of the district —a man of a frank and pleasant countenance, in perfect harmony with his well-starched shirt, his magnificent waistcoat, and large, round, gold snuff-box. It will also be understood that our host divided himself, going, coming, running, taking care that nobody wanted anything, saying something to everybody, and always addressing a bland smile to the back of the illustrious personage when he passed him, running, like a schoolboy, to a corner to swallow in a hurry, at the risk of

suffocation, some spoonfuls of soup or a few mouthfuls of beef or venison.

Among the remarkable phenomena which always form the events of an orthodox grand banquet, the buffetier presented to the noble guests a fish five feet in length, with a magnificent bouquet between the rows of its terrific teeth. Lackeys in livery, with a gentlemanly sad air, went from guest to guest with old Madeira, or Malaga, or some French wine or other. Almost everybody had their glasses filled and emptied without intermission, though they drank their wine with an air of vexation on their faces, as if they were fulfilling a disagreeable duty:—the austerity of the old gentlemen seemed especially comical. Then came champagne and toasts; the guests began to look less like sick people engaged in swallowing medicine; a little conversation commenced here and there; some happy things were said; the ice was broken at last. Of course the most remarkable thing during the course of the dinner, was an anecdote related by the illustrious dignitary himself, and received with great attention and favouring smiles by the whole company. Somebody—I rather think it was the general with the damaged reputation, who was pretty well acquainted with modern literature—spoke of the influence of women, particularly on younger people.

"Yes, yes," said the dignitary, "it is quite true. You must keep a tight rein on the young folks, otherwise the first petticoat they meet will turn their heads. (A smile circulated round the table; one gentleman's face—why, I can't tell—assumed an expression of tenderness and gratitude.) You see, young people are very stupid. There is my son, Ivan, now—a big, foolish fellow, twenty years of age. Well! one morning he comes to me quite unexpectedly, and says, without pre-

face or explanation, 'Will you be good enough to permit me to marry?' 'Go into the service first, you fool; get some position.' Then, of course, came tears and despair, and all that sort of thing . . . But I held firm . . . Ah! you see . . ."

The official was fond of employing expletives and long pauses in his conversation, and spoke more from his stomach than from his throat. He cast a majestic look on his neighbour the chancellor; the ex-general leaned his head to one side, and winked.

The dignitary resumed, "Well! what do you think? Now he writes me, thanking me heartily, and accusing himself of having been a great fool. 'Where would I be to-day,' he says, 'if you had not brought me to reason?' Ah! that is the way to go to work with these youngsters!"

The anecdote met with universal approbation; it was declared to be curious, instructive, charming; every countenance beamed with pleasure . . We rose from the table, and returned to the drawing-room; in a few minutes every card table was occupied.

About ten o'clock, I directed a servant to have my calash ready at five o'clock in the morning, and retired to my room. I was destined to make another new acquaintance to-day, whose character may perhaps be worthy of some attention.

There was not a sufficient number of bedrooms for the guests assembled; and the servants had been consequently obliged to make up two or three beds in one room. In the little damp room into which I was conducted, I found a gentleman standing undressed beside his bed. He immediately slipped under the bed-clothes, which he drew over his face; and after disposing himself conveniently on his feather-bed, he preserved a complete silence. But I soon noticed that he kept his

eyes fixed on my bed, which was standing opposite to his. In ten minutes I was undressed and in bed, wrapped up in very damp sheets. I bid my neighbour good night. I kept my candle lighted, after his example.

Half an hour passed. In spite of my best endeavours I could not sleep . . A chain of obscure, importunate thoughts revolved slowly in my head, like the buckets of a hydrostatic machine.

"It seems you are not sleeping, sir," said my neighbour, at last opening his mouth.

"Not a wink," I replied; "but it is plain you are not more fortunate than myself."

"I never sleep."

"What!"

"Well, I go to bed, and I stay there many hours before I can get the least sleep."

"I can understand that here; but in your own house, why go to bed before you feel tired and disposed to sleep?"

"O! habit."

After a minute's silence, he resumed, "I am astonished there are no bugs in this room; they ought to be here, if anywhere."

"You seem disappointed at not finding them?"

"Not at all; but this room is on the ground-floor, and evidently not very well taken care of; and I like, you see, to find sequence in everything."

Silence again on the part of my friend, who begins to appear to me somewhat original in his hours of wakefulness.

"Will you make a bet with me?" he suddenly asked in a loud voice, as if he were afraid I should get any sleep.

"About what?"

"Eh? about what? . . I'll take a bet you think me a fool."

"What do you say?"

"Yes, a fool, a brute, an ignoramus—a downright stepniak! Confess . ."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing you, then how can you imagine I have any such opinion about you?"

"How? From the very sound of your voice. You answer me in so careless a manner . . Very well, I don't care; I am not what you take me for."

"Allow me . ."

"No; allow *me*, if you please. *Pro primo*, I speak French quite as well as you; German probably much better; and in the second place, I spent three years abroad, including eight whole months at Berlin. I have studied Hegel profoundly; I know Goëthe by heart. More than that, I was head over ears in love with the daughter of a German professor, which did not, however, prevent me marrying here a handsome young lady —consumptive and bald, to be sure, but remarkably clever. So you see we are birds of a feather, and I am not quite the stepniak savage you still continue to believe me . . Allow me to inform you I am capable of thinking, and reflecting, and judging, and speaking."

I raised my head, and looked with redoubled astonishment at this odd fish. The feeble light hardly allowed me to distinguish his features.

"O! now you are staring at me," he resumed, raising his night-cap a little, "and I daresay you are wondering how the evening could have passed without your remarking me; I shall explain it to you, sir. You see I never raise my voice; I always keep behind other people, in corners and window-recesses, and never indeed speak to anybody; then I am a very short man. But why do I follow this course? why, you see, for two reasons,

I am poor, and I have made up my mind to be humble. Acknowledge now that you did not even see me the whole evening."

"Indeed, I had not the pleasure of . . ."

"Ah! exactly, I was sure of it."

He sat up and crossed his arms over his breast; the long shadow of his night-cap flickered oddly on the wall and the roof.

"And confess frankly," he added, casting a side-glance at me, "that you take me for a fool—a maniac. Then, confess too that you have a vague suspicion that all I am saying is a joke, and that I have taken it into my head to pretend a little oddity."

"You oblige me to repeat that I do not know you, and . . ."

"True, and I don't know you any better. Why then have I begun, contrary to all my habits for the last six years, to speak to a person who is a perfect stranger to me?" (My neighbour sighed.) "Why, you and I are what the French call *gens comme il faut;* we are not sleeping, neither of us . . . why then not have a little conversation? I have a fit of speaking on me just now; and these fits are very rare with me. You see, I am timid—shy, not like the stupid provincials, to be sure, but from an excess of *amour propre.* But sometimes, and especially I feel it just now, in favourable circumstances—how I can't explain—my timidity suddenly disappears, as you see just now. Bring me at this moment face to face with the Great Mogul, I should ask him without hesitation for a pinch of snuff, even though the dalai-lama were in the room at the time . . . Ah! I see you wish to go to sleep, don't you?"

"Not at all, sir, I am listening to you with great pleasure."

"Indeed, I amuse you? So much the better. O!

I suppose you know that I pass here for an original; I mean among the people who talk of me among other nothings. Ah! but nobody really knows anything about me. Nobody cares about me. They think they pique me . . . if they but knew, if they would take the trouble to observe, they would find that it is just my great misfortune to be absolutely without the least spark of originality . . . not a spark, not a spark . . . It is my opinion, sir, that it is only original people that can have a happy or a successful life on the earth; they alone are really the members of society; they alone have any individuality. 'Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre,' says some French poet of the last century. By the way, you observe with what purity I pronounce French. What is it to me that you have a spacious and well-furnished brain? you understand everything, you have vast stores of knowledge in your head, you are abreast with your age . . . What of it, if there is nothing in you that is entirely your own, something that you alone have, and no other person? There are numerous depôts of common-places in the world, but who regards them? If you have seen one, you have seen a million. Rather be a fool; but be a fool after your own fashion. Try to have a cultivated taste, but let it be your own taste . . . Originals, as I consider originality, are to be met at every step; almost every person is original. But my misfortune is precisely the want of this mark of originality . . . And yet I gave great promise in my youth; and what a high opinion I had of myself before I left for the west, as well as when I returned to my native country!

"Upon my honour, sir, I don't think there is a man upon the earth less original than your humble servant. I must have been born what the French would call an *imitation négligée* of some other man: I live after the

pattern of people described in the books I have studied, I live by the sweat of my brow—working hard to imitate others. I believe firmly that I studied, fell in love, and married, without my will having anything to do with the matter—just as James says his lesson in school after Paul, and in the very same hum-drum tone . . . A pleasant sort of originality, is it not?"

He took off his night-cap, flung it on the bed, and resumed after a pause—

"Would you like me to give you the story of my life? Nonsense . . . I mean some characteristic traits of my life; just to set you asleep. Eh?"

"I shall be delighted, and I assure you there is no danger of my going to sleep."

"No, no . . . that would be too long a story; I shall tell you about my marriage. You know of course that marriage is the touchstone of a man's character; it is the magic mirror in which he sees his whole self reflected . . . Rather hackneyed comparison, eh! . . . Allow me to help myself out of these metaphorical prefaces with a pinch of snuff."

He drew his snuff-box from beneath his pillow, and resumed his monologue, with the box open in his hand.

"Place yourself for a moment in my situation; judge for yourself, and tell me, if you please, what profit could I ever reap from the encyclopædia and all the d[redacted] of Hegel? What point in common is there b[redacted] encyclopædia and Russian life? What po[redacted] cation can be made to the mode of life a[redacted] sians of Hegelianism in particular, of [redacted] phy, or even of German erudition in [redacted]

He made a bound from his bed, [redacted] ing his teeth hard, in a sort of ra[redacted]

"Well, well, exactly . . 'Wh[redacted]

rub yourself against the cave-walls of German philosophy? Why not rather have stayed in your own country, in your own province, and studied on the spot the real life of the locality, and its wants, feelings, progress, weakness, prospects, your own situation, your own vocation, which might have been revealed to you?' . . 'Ah! gentlemen, gentlemen,'" he pursued, changing his tone from the judge's to that of a criminal called upon to say what he can in his own defence, "'how can we poor provincials study what no philosophical observer has yet written in any book? Alas! I want nothing better than to take lessons at first hand from Russian life itself . . But it is silent; no articulate word comes from its lips. One must seize its characteristics the moment they appear. And poor I, I am not capable of that; I must have analyses ready made, and conclusions drawn for me.

"'Conclusions! you will say conclusions? . . Why not listen to the literary men of Moscow? . . Are they not genuine nightingales?' Ah! my friend, that is exactly what I complain of; the writers of Moscow sing just like Koursk nightingales, while my earnest wish is, that they would speak like men.

"Well, let us return to what we were speaking about; I promised to relate to you some circumstances connected with my marriage. But, stop, I must tell you [redacted] wife is no longer living; and in the second [redacted] in the second place . . . I see very well you [redacted]prehend me if I don't return to the times [redacted] But come, tell me frankly, you wish to

[redacted]ssure you."

[redacted]t you must be very attentive, for [redacted]he next chamber one M. Kanta- [redacted]d habit of snoring loudly . . I

was born of parents in middling circumstances. My father was a poor devil with a long nose, and a face very much freckled; red hair, and with a habit of taking snuff at only one nostril. His portrait hung in my mother's room. If I am to judge by this portrait, which was said to be more faithful than flattering, he must have been remarkably ugly, in spite of—or perhaps because of—his handsome uniform, with its black velvet collar up to his ears. When I had done something to deserve a whipping, I was led before this portrait, and my mother, pointing to this ugly red figure, would say, 'You would have seen something very different, sir, if *he* had been alive!' You may imagine the love and respect thus inspired into me for the memory of my deceased parent. I had neither brothers nor sisters. I have a confused remembrance of a little brother in consumption, who used to crawl about the house like a spectre, but he was not long of going to his grave. My mother occupied herself with my education with all the ardour of a stepniak. This education began with the first day of my birth, and ended with my seventeenth year . . I am tiring you."

"Be so good as to go on."

"Very well. When I was sixteen years old, my mother dismissed my French tutor, carried me to Moscow, enrolled me in the University, and a short time afterwards returned her soul into the hands of the Almighty, leaving me to the care of a paternal uncle, a lawyer of the name of Koltoun Babourá, a vulture well known in many other places besides the district of Stchigroff. My good uncle, Koltoun Babourá, fleeced me cruelly, like the capital lawyer that he was. But that is not what I am talking of.

"I was admitted to the University; I had my mother to thank for preparing me for it. But from that time

my want of originality showed itself distinctly. My childhood was exactly like that of other children: I was brought up in a hot-house, coddled—a lean, sickly, stupid little devil; like other boys, I got verses by heart, and began to dream, and grow melancholy 'What's the matter with the boy?' 'Leave him alone respect his aspirations towards the beautiful, the ideal!' That is the way people talk . . . At the University, I *turned* what other young men are, and always will be, like beer in a thunderstorm; and I was, in course of time, naturally admitted into the *Kroujok*, the student's club. You are younger than I am, and may not know what a Kroujok of Moscow students was four or five years before your time. I remember Schiller says somewhere:—

'Gefährlich iſt's den Leu zu wecken,
Und Schrecklich iſt des Tiger's Zahn,
Doch das Schrecklichſte der Schrecken,
Das iſt der Menſch in ſeinem Wahn!'*

He is wrong, he ought to have said—

'Das iſt ein Kroujok in der Stadt Moskau.'†

"What did you find so detestable in the club?" said I to the poor gentleman, whose nerves had probably been agitated by the long ceremonious dinner.

"Detestable? A club, in my opinion, is a moral damper—it kills in the germ all individuality of heart and mind—it is the crowd, the press in which a man loses his breath and his self-possession along with his purse, watch, and pocket handkerchief. A club! it is

* Man fears the lion's kingly tread,
Man fears the tiger's fangs of terror;
And still the dreadliest of the dread,
Is man himself in error.
—*Schiller's Song of the Bell; Bulwer's Translation.*

† Is a Kroujok in the city of Moscow.

the life collective substituted for the individual life necessary for the development of the soul; it is the Procrustes' bed for the intellect, the destruction of all that is genuine and spontaneous and genial in the soul. The club substitutes dissertations for free frank discussion; it accustoms you to a barren verbiage, draws you away from solitary work, from regular connected study, from secret meditation; it inoculates you with the *scribendi cacoëthes;* it draws all the kindly sap out of the brain, all the freshness of youth out of the soul. The club! it is a dreary platitude, the dead level to which all the salient angles of a man's being are reduced; it represses every natural expression, every lively sally—and all this under the name of fraternity and friendship.

"What sort of family would one be where there were a hundred brothers? What sort of society, then, can that be in which you are expected to have a hundred serious friendships at the same time?

"Yes, in the club every member has the right, the power at any time, to thrust his dirty fingers into the breasts of his fellow-members, his so-called brothers and friends; nothing can subsist in the soul pure and intact. In the club the greatest favour is of course shown to the emptiest talker—*tinnit quia vacuum*—the vainest witling, the green Cato, the beardless Scythian philosopher. The wretched poetaster, with his hollow verbiage, is flattered with ovations—his cloudy thoughts and his vague and crude fancies meet with a rapturous reception. You see noble young fellows of seventeen years, discoursing acutely on love and woman; when they go into the company of women, they hold their tongues, or impudently address them in some borrowed phrases which they have picked up the evening before. You might as well, for the matter

of friendship and confidence, live surrounded with the agents of the police . . ."

"Will you allow me to remind you of the Latin proverb, 'if you prove too much you prove nothing.' I think you have been decidedly betrayed into exaggeration. Pardon me, but hyperbole is a bugbear of mine, you see."

My original friend looked at me without speaking.

"Perhaps you are right; God knows me; I know myself but imperfectly. It is rather humiliating to be corrected so, but perhaps you are right; for indeed we poor devils, banished by fate far from communion with cultivated minds, find almost our only pleasure in exaggeration—we have always a strong craving towards it.

"Well, it was in society more or less like what I have described—pardon me again!—that I passed four years at Moscow. But I cannot describe to you with what amazing rapidity that time passed away; when I remember it, I have a lively feeling of joy mingled with pain and regret. I would rise at day-break, take my skates, go out to the ice, and pass the day in the most delightful enjoyment; at sunset I returned home. My servant, who was always asleep, wakes and gives me my surtout; I put it on, go to some comrade's house, smoke a pipe, drink a large cup of tea—very weak, and we begin to talk German philosophy, or discourse on love, that eternal sun of the soul, or some other subject equally moving. Other students would drop in, observing the lighted windows. I met there at least a few original individualities, who could accommodate their necks to the yoke, and thus keep their natural disposition and character unmodified and unsubdued. But I —I was mere soft wax, and my weak unhappy nature could not resist the least pressure. Well, at one-and-twenty years of age I entered into possession of my

estate, I mean of as much of it as the prudence of my uncle thought right to leave me.

"At last I was master of myself; and I gave authority to one of my serfs, Vacili Koudracheff, to manage the whole of my patrimonial possessions; crossed the frontier, and made all haste to Berlin. I passed, as I told you, three years abroad, without acquiring any greater force of character. Of course I learned nothing about Europe or European life; I did not even make any enquiries about it. I attended the lectures of the learned professors of Germany; I read German books on the spot where they were written . . That was all the difference for me between Germany and Moscow. At Berlin, however, I lived alone—a veritable anchorite; my chamber was a monkish cell. I happened to see now and then some ex-lieutenants like myself, slow of comprehension and of speech. I sometimes walked about town with some very rough Russians—very rough fellows indeed, from the wheat districts of Penza, Simbirsk, Tamboff, or Saratoff; and sometimes entered a café to look over the newspapers, or paid a visit to the royal theatre.

I saw little of the natives—I could not talk with them without great mental fatigue; they seemed very stiff, and I never had any at my own rooms, except two or three young Jews, who hoped to find the Russian freer with his money than the cautious German. Mere chance made me acquainted with one of the professors of the University; I went to his house to get a ticket for his lectures. My face must have pleased him, I suppose, for he invited me to pass the evening at his house. He had two daughters, one twenty-six, the other twenty-seven years of age, both with very squat figures, enormous noses, a great many long cork-screw curls, and pale blue eyes. One was

called Linchen, the other Minchen. I began to frequent the professor's house.

"The notion somehow or other got into my head that I was in love with Linchen; for six whole months I was convinced of it. I talked very little with her, but I looked at her a great deal; I read sentimental books to her; indeed, I got the length of sometimes secretly pressing her hand; and in the evening, when I was sitting beside her, I looked a great deal at the moon; and if there was no moon, well then, up into the air. Linchen had a remarkable talent for making coffee. Wasn't all this delightful? But there was one blot on this scene of happiness. In the most delightful moments, I felt restless, uneasy, afraid lest I should commit some crime against the laws of polite society; I had to keep a watch constantly on myself, lest I should be carried away by some feeling of the moment. I was in a fever. The idea, that perhaps I might commit some imprudence, so overwhelmed me, that I was unable any longer to support my *happiness*, and I fled from Berlin.

"I passed two years more abroad; I visited Italy, I gazed at Rome on the Transfiguration; I saw the celebrated Venus at Florence. A vague, but strong enthusiasm seized me in that country; I began to write a journal, and to make verses in the evenings; in short, I did what everybody does.

"At last I regained our frontiers," he pursued, after having several times taken off and put on, thrown down and taken up, his night-cap. "I went straight to Moscow, intending to pass a week or two there, before going down to my estate. A most astonishing metamorphosis happened to me at Moscow. When abroad, I never opened my lips, never spoke to a soul; but here suddenly a rage for talking seized me, and at the same time I fell into a high opinion of myself. I

met with some indulgent people who were condescending enough to take me for a genius, and the ladies generally listened with interest to my stories and descriptions of foreign countries.

"But I soon fell from this glorious height; eight or nine days after my appearance in Moscow some calumnies made their appearance against me. I don't know who was the author of them; it was probably some old woman of the male sex—such as swarm in great numbers in Moscow. The calumny grew and spread out shoots like a wood-strawberry. My feet got entangled in it; there was no help for it; I had to leave Moscow society.

"I retired to my estate without bidding adieu to anybody. When I arrived there, and saw all the old places again where I had played when a child—where I had experienced the joys and sorrows of boyhood—my eyes filled with tears, and I anticipated a quiet and happy life in the old mansion of my fathers. But these delightful anticipations, you know, are never realised; one never fails to stumble against some disenchanting unforeseen realities—distempers, changes of climate, deficits, debts, protests, sales by auction, *e tutte quante*. I occupied myself every day with some new plan, with the help of my new bourmister Iakoff—who turned out as great a thief, by the way, as his predecessor—and thus I got through the first two months, with no greater inconvenience than arose from the villainous smell of Iakoff's greasy boots, which, however, I could not prevail on him to part with.

"I was dying of ennui, when I happened one day to remember a neighbouring family with whom we had formerly been acquainted. This family consisted of a colonel's widow and two young ladies, her daughters. I got out my drochka, and drove off to their house.

That day ought to be deeply engraved on my memory. Six months after my first visit to the lady, I married her youngest daughter."

At these words my remarkable friend cast his eyes on the floor, and raised his right hand to heaven. A moment after he resumed with great warmth—

"I should not like to give you a bad opinion of my wife; heaven preserve me from committing such injustice towards her memory. She was a very good and noble creature—an amiable and devoted wife; but, at the same time, I must confess to you that if I had not been so unfortunate as to lose her, I should very probably not be here talking with you just now; however, the joist in my coach-house I had selected to hang myself on is as firm as ever in its place.

"There are some pears," he resumed, "which do not acquire their true flavour and juiciness till they have lain for some time in a pit under ground. There must have been something in my wife of a similar nature; for, upon my word, it was not till she had left this world that I could, without bitterness, render full justice to her admirable qualities.

"The ladies were people in rather narrow circumstances. They lived in an old wooden house—pretty well furnished, however—which stood on the slope of a hill; in front, grounds filled with weeds, and at the back a large garden filled with brushwood. The mother was a cross old woman—a narrow-minded provincial bârynia—a shrew, her mouth filled with scolding and bawling, and her eyes with venomous and tyrannical looks. The elder daughter, Véera, did not differ in any respect from other provincial girls; the younger, Sophia . . . Sophia means wisdom, does it not? . . . it was with Sophia I fell in love. The two sisters had a room to themselves; there, in addition to two plain wooden

beds, albums in faded bindings met your eye, flower-pots of mignonette, portraits of male and female friends very ill drawn in pencil, two statuettes—one of Goëthe, the other of Schiller, German books, garlands and coronals of centauries, long since withered, and other little remembrances of absent friends. Among the portraits I noticed one of a gentleman of an extraordinary energetic physiognomy, and with a signature as swaggering as his air. I was told this was the portrait of a young man who had given the greatest promise in his youth, and who, like us all, had ended by not fulfilling any of them.

"It is odd, but it was not when I was in Sophia's company that I felt fondest of her. On the contrary, I liked rather to dream about her in her absence, and idealise her at leisure, especially of an evening on the terrace. Giving myself up entirely to my own thoughts, I gazed in self-forgetfulness on the splendour of the setting sun, on the trees, and the green leaves, each standing out in clear outline against the purple evening sky, while Sophia would sit down to the piano, and play a short passage from one of Beethoven's pieces, of a singularly melancholy and impassioned character, which seemed to constitute the whole musical world of the young lady. It was on one of the many evenings spent in this way that I waited on the old lady, and demanded the hand of her younger daughter. Two months after, we were united in the bonds of holy matrimony, and received the benedictions of the church, and the congratulations of all our neighbours.

"I thought I loved Sophia . . . I certainly ought to be able by this time to know whether I did or not . . . Well—but—on my honour, I am not yet in a condition to declare positively that I did love her. She was a good creature—clever, silent, and warm-hearted; but—

God knows whether it arose from her country life, or from some other unknown cause—she seemed to have in the depths of her soul some wound, some sore always open—an undefined, indescribable pain, to which neither she nor I could give a name. You of course understand that I did not find out this till after marriage . . . I remember I had in my childhood a canary, which I kept in a cage. One morning a cat entered the room when the door of the cage happened to be open; it had just seized the poor bird when I luckily entered the room. I rescued my favourite, but it never had the spirit to sing a note afterwards, and it very soon died. My Sophia was somewhat like that unfortunate canary—a sickly, lean, shy, miserable being. There were moments when the desire would seize her to brighten up—to enjoy herself a little, but it would not do; the lassitude, the feeling of weakness, the prostration was only greater. One day I fell on the idea that there must have been something in Sophia's past life that was weighing on her existence . . . I questioned her closely, but without success; I could discover nothing.

"You understand, of course, that an original man, after trying all these means, would have shrugged his shoulders, borne the unavoidable evil, and endeavoured to make a little enjoyment and life for himself. But I . . . a poor being born without the least vestige of originality, what did I do? . . . I began to examine the joists of my coach-house.

"All the habits and customs of the old woman—Beethoven, the evening walks, mignonette flower-pots, writing to sentimental friends, albums, and such absurdities, were so infused and ingrained into my wife, that she could not fit herself to another mode of life, she could not make herself mistress of a house, as I wished, and occupy her mind with some useful and

healthy employment. The linen was ill washed and worse done up; there was always something wrong with the dinners; the time for filling the ice-house was allowed to pass; the furniture was full of holes and covered with dust; tea, or coffee, or sugar—some one of the three—was always wanting; while my wife worried herself all day with a nameless sorrow, and in the evening bored me with the eternal—

'O west wind! so gently, gently sighing,
Do not wake him at the dawning of the day' . . .

"We passed three years in this way, with the reputation of being a pair of happy turtle-doves.

"In the middle of the fourth year, Sophia died in childbed; I had a presentiment that she would never give me a child that could live. I remember the most minute circumstances connected with the burial of mother and child. But I will not fatigue you with them; I will only say that, even in death, there remained on my wife's face the same sickly, mute, sad, timid, uneasy expression which had never left it in life . . . even on her death-bed the gnawing, carking half-consciousness had remained with her . . . She was a good woman, a kind soul; but why not acknowledge that it was well, even for herself, that she died then?"

I looked at the poor fellow; his eyes at this moment were filled with tears, and his face inflamed.

"When I recovered from the grief into which I had been thrown by the death of my wife, I resolved to make an attempt to save myself from the moral torpor into which I had sunk. I entered the service of the government. But, in the large rooms of the office with which I was connected, I became subject to headaches, and my sight was growing weak. These and other things decided me to leave. I desired at first to go to Moscow, but I had no money. I returned to the

country, tried what I could to ingratiate myself with my neighbours, who had been awed by the reputation of my learning, my residence abroad, and the other peculiarities of my education; and made some unsuccessful attempts at appearing before the world as an author. I was snubbed in every direction; from all quarters proofs reached me of my utter insignificance, my nothingness, in the world. But I was still blind; I still refused to acknowledge my nonentity.

"At last there came a day when I was to receive a lesson on the worth of my personality. I received a visit from the captain of police—the ispravnik; he came to call my attention to the fact that a bridge on my property had fallen, and would require to be repaired or rebuilt. This sage guardian of public order, while devouring the lunch and swallowing the wine I had set before him, took it into his head to administer a paternal reprimand on the condition of the roads on my estate. At the same time, he sympathised with me on the subject of my poverty, and entered a little into my situation, even condescending to advise me to fill up the ditch—the bridge over which had fallen—with rubbish. He then lighted his pipe, and turned the conversation on the coming elections. Encouraged by the air of affection with which this brute of an ispravnik had been treating me, I was betrayed into giving him my opinion about the lord-marshal of the province—one Orbassanoff, a low-born fellow, an insupportable brawler and intrepid peculator, whom I rather looked down upon. The ispravnik stared in my face, placed his hand in a familiar manner on my shoulder, and said with an air of insinuating and sarcastic kindness—'Eh! Vacili Vacilytch, it is hardly for poor heads like yours or mine to estimate people of that ability? We should know our own place; large ships need deep

seas.' 'Pray, tell me,' said I, 'what enormous difference is there between this M. Orbassanoff and me?' The ispravnik, at this question, took his pipe out of his mouth, opened his eyes very wide, and burst into a roar of laughter, shouting, as far as his paroxysm of hilarity would allow him, 'Capital, capital! he does it well! what a grave air too! capital! capital!' And up to the moment of his leaving he did not cease to jeer me, from time to time poking his fist into my side.

"This was the drop that was wanting to make my cup of sorrow run over. I paced up and down in my drawing-room, stopped before the mirror, looked at myself for a long time, observed carefully all the marks of my confusion. The scales had fallen from my eyes, and I saw clearly—more clearly than I perceived my own figure in the mirror—what a stupid, insignificant, useless, common individual I was, and had always been.

"In Voltaire's *Electre* . . Voltaire did not write an Electre? . . Well—in the *Andromaque* of the great Racine, perhaps—there is a character, Oreste, I believe, who congratulates himself on having reached the extreme limits of misery and misfortune. There is nothing, to be sure, great or absolutely tragical in my destiny; but I, too, have experienced a similar feeling in the depths of my humble obscurity. I, too, have known raptures poisoned by cold despair. I, too, understand how sweet it is to spend the whole morning without stirring, without rising from bed, without even raising the head weighed down by sleepless sorrow, in cursing the day and hour of my birth."

"Ah! ah! well, I never heard the like!" muttered M. Kantagrukhin from the neighbouring chamber; "who is this fool, talking in that room there, at two or three o'clock in the morning?"

My friend dived rapidly under the bed-clothes, afterwards putting out his head by little and little, and making monitory signs to me with his finger.

"Hush! hush!" he muttered. And with several deprecatory and apologetic bows in the direction of M. Kantagrukhin's voice, he murmured, in a tone of the deepest respect, "A thousand pardons, sir, a thousand pardons!" Then, addressing me, he added—"He ought to have his sleep, he is quite right; he requires to restore his exhausted powers, were it only to eat to-morrow with the same gusto he displayed to-day at dinner. We have no right to disturb a rest so precious. Besides, I have said all I wished to tell you; you probably wish to go to sleep; I wish you good night."

The poor fellow turned, and again retreated under the bed-clothes.

"Allow me at least to ask with whom I have had the honour . . ."

Raising his head quickly, he interrupted me—

"No, for God's sake, don't ask my name; permit me to remain, for you, plain *Vacili Vacilytch*, an unknown being, whom Providence has subjected to painful trials. You understand that, wanting, as I do, the least mark of originality, I do not deserve to have even a name. If you wish some name by which to remember me, call me the little rustic *Hamlet* of the district of Stchigroff. It is true that the family of *Hamlets* is numerous enough in our country; but perhaps you have never before passed a night in listening to the Odyssey of one of the unhappy fraternity. Adieu!"

The poor devil plunged again into his feather-bed; and next day, when the valet came to me at seven o'clock, to give me notice that my calash was ready, his bed was empty; the servant informed me he had left at day-break.

CHAPTER XXI.

NATIVE ODDITIES.—STEPNIAK GENTLEMEN.

One hot sultry summer day I was returning from shooting in my telega. Ermolaï, seated by me, amused himself with whistling in a very comical manner. The dogs under our feet seemed pieces of inanimate matter, so worn out were they with fatigue. The coachman had enough to do to protect his horses from the intrepid attacks of an immense swarm of gnats. Clouds of white dust—we were passing over a chalky soil—rose from the wheels of the carriage. We entered a copse. The road there was very rough, and the wheels laid hold of the sloping branches of the trees, and crushed and tore them to pieces. Ermolaï, who had been dosing a little, awakened by the rough jolts he was receiving from the inequalities of the road, looked about him, and exclaimed immediately, "Hallo, hallo! what a capital place for quails!"

Upon this, we scrambled down nimbly from the carriage, and began to make our way through the brake. My dog made a point; the bird flew up; I fired, the quail fell. I was reloading my piece, when all at once, behind me, I heard a crackling noise many times repeated, and a gentleman separating the bushes so as to clear a path for himself, appeared and said in a very supercilious tone; "Hallo! al-al-allow me to ask y-y-

you, s-s-sir, wh-wh-what right y-y-you have to sh-shoot he-he-here?"

The unknown (who was addressing me in this way), stuttered fearfully; besides, he spoke with a strong nasal tone. I looked attentively at him; in all my life I had never seen such a face before. Figure to yourself a little fan-peaked face, with a small flat nose and very long red moustaches; on his head, squeezed down over his eyebrows, was a Persian cap, pointed at the top, from which hung as far as the middle of his cheek, and on each side of his face, oblong pieces of violet-coloured cloth; an old yellow arkhalouk, over which was hung his powder flask, covered his shoulders—ornamented with silver lace wan and rubbed at all the seams; a hunting horn was round his neck, and a poignard in his belt. He rode a poor old foundered hack, of a roan colour; two setters, extremely lean, sickly and lame, stood at the horse's feet. The appearance, look, voice, gestures, movements, everything, in short, about the unknown betokened a foolish audacity and unconquerable pride—something, in fact, not far from insanity. His eyes of a glassy blue had no expression in them; they were half shut, and looked at you as if their owner were intoxicated; he held his head well back, puffed up his cheeks, and kept bridling himself as if with an exuberance of personal dignity, much like a turkey-cock when it is angry. Not receiving an immediate reply, this personage repeated his question almost in the same terms.

"I didn't know but that anybody could shoot here," I replied.

"Here! sir—you are on my grounds."

"Indeed! I'll go away, then."

"Sir, allow me to ask if it is a gentleman to whom I have the honour of speaking. (I told him my name). Well then, you can shoot as much as you like; I am a

gentleman myself, and follow the pleasures which are customary among persons in my station of society. My name is Panteleï Tchertapkhanoff."

He bowed, cried tchik, tchik, and pulled the bridle; his horse, pricking up his ears, tossed his head, described a half circle on his hind legs, and when bringing his fore feet down to the ground, slightly bruised the sound paw of one of the dogs. The poor beast yelled fearfully. Tchertapkhanoff reddened, and flew into a furious passion; he dealt his horse a stunning blow with his fist on the head, sprang to the ground like lightning, examined the dog's paw, spat spitefully on the wounded member, lent the animal a vigorous kick in the side to make it stop its howling, then seized the pommel of the saddle, and put his left foot in the stirrup. The horse threw up his head, snorted, lashed the air with his tail, and darted off amongst the bushes. His master followed him, overtook him about fifty paces off, passed his leg across him, and when he felt himself in the saddle, cracked his nagaïka* lustily, sounded his horn, and gallopped off at full speed, wherever his fancy might lead him.

I had scarcely lost sight of Tchertapkhanoff and his hack in the distance, when a short, fat man, about forty, issued from the thicket, mounted on a beautiful bay. He stopped about three paces from me, took off his green morocco hunting-cap, and in a gentle tone asked me if I had seen a horseman mounted on a roan.

I replied in the affirmative.

"What direction did he take, if you please?" pursued he in the same tone, his cap still in his hand.

"That way."

"A thousand thanks, sir."

"Tchik, tchik," he cried, dug his spurs into his

* A Cossack whip.

horse's flanks, and went off at a trot in the direction pointed out to him. I followed him with my eye, till I could see only the top of his cap above the bushes. The exterior of this other unknown was quite different from the preceding. His bloated face, round as the moon, had an expression of timidity, good humour, and forbearance; his round club nose, with swelling nostrils, traced with blue veins, betrayed sensual predilections. He had not a single vestige of hair on the upper part of his head, whilst the nape of his neck, from ear to ear, was adorned with a silken garland of fair hair; his eyes, of an almond shape, had a very sweet expression; his moist, red lips seemed formed for smiles. He wore a frock-coat, with a stiff collar and leather buttons; it was not by any means new, you must observe, but it had been brushed carefully; his trousers—I speak from actual survey—had gradually moved up to his knees, and over the red tops of his boots peered forth two calves, such as have never been seen at the courts of monarchs. I looked at Ermolaï with an enquiring eye. I then asked him about this horseman, whom, I saw, he had recognised at the first glance, and I was not deceived.

"He is," said he, "Fikhon Ivanovitch Nédopeouskin; he lives with Tchertapkhanoff."

"Is he a poor man?"

"Poor? yes, I think so, very poor . . . and Tchertapkhanoff too, his host, passes the best half of the year without a single halfpenny in his pocket."

"Why, then, does he live with him?"

"Well, they are a kind of inseparables; one never goes anywhere without the other . . . As the proverb says—'Where there is a horse with a hoof, comes the crayfish with his claws.'"

We came out of the copse. All at once, two b

debouched from the brushwood near us, and from amongst the oats, nearly full-grown, sprang forth, leaping and bounding, a large, full-grown hare, the beagles and harriers after him, and along with them Tchertapkhanoff-himself. He did not utter the cries customary in such cases; panting, and out of breath, he looked as if he had been taking boiling soup; hurried sounds, without any meaning in them, dropped convulsively from his lips; he gallopped about, his eyes starting from his head, lashing the sides of his unfortunate hack with his nagaïka. The harriers surrounded him; the hare shrunk together, turned, and ran like lightning, right before Ermolaï, and threw himself amongst the bushes; the harriers resumed their search. "Se-se-seek him, se-se-seek him out," muttered the wearied sportsman, with his tongue almost sticking to the roof of his mouth. "Fire, brother, fi-fi-fire!" Ermolaï fired... The wounded hare rolled over amongst the soft grass, made a last struggle, and gave forth its last sigh between the teeth of a beagle, who was immediately surrounded by the whole pack.

In the twinkling of an eye, Tchertapkhanoff dismounted, seized his dagger, pulled the dogs hastily away by their hind legs, and snatched their victim from their fangs. He plunged the blade up to the haft in its neck, and set up great exclamations of "ho! ho! ho!" Fikhon Ivanovitch appeared at the edge of the bushes. Tchertapkhanoff, on seeing him, cried "ho! ho!" louder than before. "Ho! ho! ho!" repeated his complaisant friend, in a quiet tone.

"I need hardly observe that it is too bad to hunt in summer," said I to Tchertapkhanoff, pointing out to him a large piece of oats all trampled on and spoiled.

"It's my field," said Tchertapkhanoff, coming up to me, and speaking with such difficulty, that I was sorry I had addressed him.

He cut the hare's legs off, hung its body to his saddle, and threw the paws to his dogs.

"I owe you a shot, brother, according to the rules of sport," said he, addressing Ermolaï. "And you, sir," added he, in his dry, rude, abrupt tone, "I thank." ... He remounted his horse ... "Excuse me, I have forgotten your names ... Will you have the goodness ..."

I told him again.

"Happy to make your acquaintance. If you come to see me at home, you will do me a favour ... Fikhon Ivanytch, where is Fomka?" he said, in an irritated tone; "we have hunted the hare without him."

"His horse fell beneath him," replied Fikhon Ivanovitch, with his habitual smile.

"Ho-ho-how! a fall? ha-has Orbassan (the horse) fa-fallen? Foo-foo-fool ... whe-whe-where is he?"

"Down there, at the back of the wood."

Tchertapkhanoff struck his nag on the nose with his nagaïka, and galloped off in search of him. Fikhon Ivanovitch made me two bows—one for himself, and the other, I suppose, for his comrade, and trotted off through the copse.

These two gentlemen excited my lively curiosity. I inquired what bond of sympathy had united two such opposite natures in such indissoluble friendship. Here is the account which I received, after a minute investigation:—

Pantéleï Eréméitch Tchertapkhanoff was looked upon as a madcap in all the country round—a hare-brained fellow of the most dangerous kind, and a thorough-going scamp. He had served, but only for a short time, in a regiment of the line, and had left out of disgust with the service, because he considered his rank not suited to his merits.

He was descended from an ancient house, formerly

opulent; his forefathers lived in barbaric splendour on their estate in the steppes, the memory of whom exists only in the brains of centenarians. They received into their house small and great, known and unknown; they made them eat and drink till they were almost bursting; they kept a private orchestra, a numerous choir of singers, male and female, besides buffoons and dogs; on feast days the brandy and porter flowed freely. In winter the whole family went to Moscow, in their heavy lumbering kolymagues, a kind of family carriage used by the nobles—genuine Noah's arks; and sometimes, on returning to their family hearth, they were forced, being without a single halfpenny, to live in a very retired manner on provisions raised on their own estates.

The father of Pantéleï Eréméitch had received an inheritance already dreadfully encumbered with debt, and enjoyed it himself in such a way, that when he died, he left to his only son Pantéleï the village of Bezsonovo, heavily burdened with taxes in arrears, with thirty-five male serfs, and seventy-six females, quartered on fourteen acres of moorland in the steppe of Kolobrod. No traces of any mortgage on his lands could be found among the papers of the deceased. The late noble had spent what had been left him by his father twenty times over, and in a very strange manner; he had been the victim of his own power of contrivance. Following his particular bent, he refused to have any dealings, in the way of business, with the inhabitants of the adjacent towns, or with any brigands (as he termed them) of their class, as he deemed it unbecoming the character of a Russian dvoreanin (gentleman); and established on his estate factories, workshops, and brought from all quarters workmen of every trade. "It is," said he, "more becoming, and less expensive; it shows a head for economical plans." These fine notions were his

hobby till the day of his death. They ruined him; but he had the satisfaction of enjoying himself, and indulging his humour in the execution of all his whims.

Among other inventions, he made his workmen build, from a design of his own, a colossal family carriage; but, in spite of the efforts of all the horses in the village, aided by their masters, who were assembled in full force to put in motion the movable house, it remained firmly embedded in the sand; and at last, by a long united effort, the enormous mass moved, but only to fall; it was smashed to pieces, and after the fragments had been removed, Eréméï Loukitch (Pantéleï Eréméitch's father) directed a monument to be erected on the site of its fall—disconcerting himself no further about the misfortune.

He had also a plan for constructing a church, so grand, as he deemed it, that he immediately set to work, without consulting a single human being in the affair. Eréméï had not the slightest suspicion that the most miserable workman that ever breathed might have pointed out defects in his plans and measures for carrying on the work. He cut down a whole forest to supply fuel for making bricks; and splendid bricks they were; he laid foundations so extensive, that they enclosed a space sufficiently large for a cathedral; even he himself was struck with the colossal proportions of the building when they were busy at the walls; but as nobody runs counter to the opinion of a noble, the workmen were directed to proceed to the building of the arches in the nave, then the cupola . . . The cupola fell, bringing with it a part of the nave; they cleared away the rubbish, and began afresh, and a second time the cupola tumbled down. There is luck in number three; he began it a third time . . . and a third time the cupola fell in one entire mass with a terrible crash, and long

fissures, as if produced by lightning, appeared in the walls. At this stroke, our Eréméï Loukitch reflected; "sorcery," thought he, "has clearly been at work here, and somebody has thrown an evil eye upon it." . . . And all at once he took it into his head to order all the old women in the village to be put to the proof by flogging, so as to discover the beldame whose witchery had caused its fall. No matter, every thing considered, the village possesses the romantic ruins of the church, though there is no other tradition connected with it than the memory of this remarkable freak.

Eréméï Loukitch, delivered from this care, threw himself heart and soul into another favourite project, that of constructing cottages for his peasants on a new plan—a whim that could not be indulged without putting him to some expense; but his power of contrivance could not be hindered by a momentary sacrifice. Three enclosed triangles were bounded by one great triangle with a central point, in the midst of which a pole was erected; upon this pole an aerial lodge was fixed, for a colony of starlings; beneath the cote fluttered a pendant . . . In short, hardly a day passed in which he did not produce some new contrivance, sometimes in cookery, trying some kind of bread or soup, which turned out an uneatable mixture of all sorts of elements; sometimes he cut off all the hair from the tails and manes of his numerous horses, and, from the crop thus obtained, made caps for his numerous household. Another time a fancy seized him for substituting the filaments of nettles for those of flax in making cloth; and he demonstrated the possibility of feeding hogs during the best half of the year on mushrooms. One day he read in a Moscow journal, an important article written by a landed proprietor, named Khriagoff, in the government of Kharkoff, on the advantages of having serfs of good moral

character on one's estate. The day after, he ordered his peasants, without exception, to commit this article to memory. They did so; their lord thinking that they did not understand it very well, was going to examine them, but the steward saved them from this trial by guaranteeing their complete understanding of the subject. At this time also, Eréméï Loukitch, still keeping in play his powers of planning, ordered every one of his serfs to be numbered, and that, for this purpose, they should sew a high collar on their coats, on which was inscribed their number in figures made of red cloth. Every time a peasant passed his master, he called out—"No. 5!" or "No. 24!" or "No. 71!" and the bârin replied—"Pass on, child of God!"

Notwithstanding his grand methods and magnificent plans, Eréméï Loukitch fell gradually into most embarrassed circumstances; he had mortgaged his villages that were farthest distant on his property, and he soon lost the whole of them. The last hereditary refuge—the village in which rose the majestic ruin of the still-born church, was put up for sale by the crown, happily after the death of Eréméï Loukitch, who could not have supported a blow so terrible to his pride and dignity. He died, however, in his own house—in his own bed, in the old manor-house, surrounded by clodpoles—his own property—and under the eye of his own physician. He left, alas! to his only son and heir of his name, poor Pantéleï, only the village of Bezsonovo . . .

Pantéleï was with his regiment, and in great disgust with the service, when the news reached him of the last illness of his father. He was then entering his nineteenth year. From childhood till joining his regiment, he had been under the tuition of his mother, a very good woman—weak, but well-intentioned. He had a

headstrong, stubborn temper; he was spoiled; he was, in short, a terrible fellow. Erémeï Loukitch, entirely absorbed in his studies and economical experiments, could not find time to aid his wife in the education of his heir. One day, seeing the obstinacy of the child in pronouncing the letter R, *err*, he gave him a sound thrashing with his own hands; but Erémeï Loukitch had that day met with a great misfortune—his best dog had been killed by the fall of a tree.

The care which Vacilissa Vacilievna bestowed on the education of her son was confined to ardent wishes that an arrangement she was about to make might be successfully effected.

The good lady entertained the idea of inducing, by some means or other, Birkoft, an old Alsatian soldier, to be tutor to her son. Up to the day of her death, this poor woman lived in terror of this man—as rough as his former occupation had been. "For," thought she, "if he leave us, I am undone; what shall I do, unhappy woman? Where shall I find another tutor? I have had already the greatest difficulty in enticing this man away from my neighbour down there!" And Birkoft, the cunning knave! profited by the perfect independence of his position. He drank spirits for the purpose of inducing sound and quiet sleep, and lay in bed the rest of his time to sleep off the effects of the liquor; this was almost all his daily occupation, and its uniformity was not displeasing to him. When his pupil approached his eighteenth year, his studies in the sciences and the belles lettres suddenly stopped; he went into the army. The lady was then no longer alive; she had died several months before this important event—frightened to death by something she had seen in a dream. In her sleep she had seen a man as white as snow astraddle on a black bear. Erémeï Loukitch

died nine months after his wife—three months after the departure of his heir to join his regiment in a garrison town.

Pantéleï, on the first news of his father's illness, obtained leave of absence, and came down express. In spite of all his activity, he found his father a corpse. But what was the consternation of this loving and dutiful son when, twenty days after the funeral, he found himself reduced to beggary, after having believed himself a person of large property, and, up to the hour of this discovery, a rich young lord! There are few people capable of supporting so terrible a stroke; Pantéleï, child and impetuous youth as he had been, in a few weeks passed into a man of fiery and passionate character. He had been honest, generous, good, affectionate, although petulant and whimsical; he now became proud and fierce; he gave up all connection with his neighbours, insulting the rich and scorning the poor—affronting them all, and braving, with unheard-of audacity, the constituted authorities. "I am none of your nobility nor gentry; I belong to the old grandees; know that well!" he would say in his passionate fits.

One day he was within a little of shooting an agent of the police, who, probably from forgetfulness, had entered his house with his cap on. It must be said that the local authorities, on their part, never missed an opportunity of signalizing, at his expense, their zeal for the public welfare. They were, however, in great awe of him, because he was very passionate, and, at the first word uttered disrespectfully by his antagonist, would offer to fight him a duel with knives. On the least objection his eye glared wildly, and his voice rose—"I, I," stuttered he, "I'll g-give you f-f-fair play" . . and it was very difficult to appease him.

He was a worthy man, however, and never engaged

in any intrigue. To be sure, people were not too fond of visiting him; but at home he was sensible and generous after his own fashion. You could not look at him without terror, when anybody insulted, wronged, or oppressed a servant of his: a tigress is not more furious in protecting her whelps than he was in defending his peasants. "What," cried he, striking himself a violent blow on the head, "will any dare to touch any one of my people . . I would not be Tchertapkhanoff if I didn't finish the scoundrel . ."

Fikhon Ivanytch Nedopeouskin could not boast, like Tchertapkhanoff, of high birth; his father, who belonged to the odnovoretz class, had only risen to the rank of noble by serving forty years assiduously and irreproachably in a government office. This was all the old man had gained, for he was of the number of those men whom fortune thwarts and persecutes with an obstinacy which resembles the spite of private animosity. During sixty entire years, from the day of his birth to that of his death, the unhappy man had not ceased to contend with distress and misery—the almost invariable attendants of straitened means. He struggled against these ills like a fish in a glass globe; he had never sufficient food, drink, or sleep; had to bid many a sad adieu to the miserable coppers he had worked so hard to gain; had very often to suffer terribly for another's fault; and after forty years of this miserable torture, at the very time when he needed repose and a retiring allowance for his long and valuable services, he died in a lodging which could neither be called a cellar nor a barn—partaking equally of the character of both.

When this blow struck him, his last hours were embittered with the reflection that his children would be left without food. He was a good honest old man; no one could say that he had taken any advantage of enriching

himself, even when he had the opportunity. He had had a wife, a lean, miserable, and asthmatic woman. She brought him several children . . Happily they all died in infancy except Fikhon and his sister, the beautiful Mitrodora, who, after meeting with several odd adventures, had ended by marrying an old land-agent.

Fikhon's father, when alive, had obtained for him a situation in a government office as supernumerary; but he left it soon after his death. The cruel struggle which his parents had to maintain to provide for their children the commonest necessaries of life, the visible depression of his mother, and the never ceasing despondency of his father, had tended to sow the seeds of extreme cowardice in his mind. At the sight of a superior he trembled and turned pale, and in one instance actually swooned away. He threw up his situation, and never returned to it again.

Nature, in her sportive way, if I dare speak so, has developed in certain men, born for drudgery, faculties and inclinations not at all in unison with their social position and their means of existence. She had taken a strange pleasure in making Fikhon, son of a deputy-registrar of the courts, a sensitive, indolent, sweet-tempered being, genial and voluptuous; endowed with the most delicate organs of taste and smell. She had expended all her skill and resources in fashioning and moulding this little Sybarite, and then she decreed that he should live for ever on the sour krout and fish diet of the miserable peasant. And it was in this condition that this living paradox first saw the light.

Fate, who had incessantly harassed Fikhon's father, was hardly less kind to himself. He was not reduced at once to despair, nor had he to endure insults and the keen gnawing of hunger; but his evil destiny tossed him, at her wild mad will, through all the Russias,

and compelled him to perform many a degrading and ridiculous office. Sometimes Fikhon was installed as major-domo in the house of some benevolent, but bilious and peevish old lady, where life was a burden to him; at other times, he lived in the capacity of guest in the house of some rich merchant, with a spade beard and ample blue cafetan, avaricious in the highest degree; afterwards, perhaps, with the head of the provincial inland revenue office, a lordling, with streaky, bloodshot eyes, and hair dressed in the English fashion. He sunk at last so low, as to live in the character of half-valet, half-buffoon, with a dog-fancier.

Fate, in short, had dealt out slowly the poisoned philter of a dependent existence. He submitted in all these exigencies to the dull whims and cross fancies of the indolent gentry. How often, at night, freed from the coarse pleasantry and excessive debauchery of the guests in his patron's house, has he, sore at heart, and with tears in his eyes, sworn that the morrow would see the last of him as a dependent—that he would make his way secretly to the nearest town, and take the first clerkship he could get, or die of hunger in the street. But when the morrow came, his resolutions had vanished; *he* leave the house in a clandestine way! *he* wander as a vagabond in the town to solicit a place! . . impossible . . . Who would employ him? Who would engage him? "No, no," said he, "no one will listen to my entreaties; no one will give me anything; the door will be shut in my face; I shall be insulted even at the door." He would toss about in anguish on his bed; and next day would be called to furnish new diversion to his patron's guests.

Fikhon was thus in a deplorable condition; the more, as Providence had not endowed him with the least spirit or fortitude—indispensable qualifications for

a professed joker. He could neither dance nor make bon mots; and one night, having been stripped naked for diversion, when the thermometer was at twelve degrees below the freezing point, he was foolish enough to catch a severe cold . . His stomach could no longer stand the wine mixed with ink, nor the other things which they gave him—it had an especial aversion for a sauce which always appeared on his table, a compound of mushrooms and strong vinegar.

No one can tell how it would have fared with him at last, had not one of his benefactors, a rich old farmer, taken the notion into his head, in a whim, to enter in his will the unexpected legacy: "I give and bequeath, to Zeze (read Fikhon) Nedopeouskin, in full fief, for his own behoof and those of his children lawfully begotten, free of all charges and mortgage, my village of Bezeelendeefka, and all the lands, meadows, fields, and woods, thereto belonging." Some days after the will had been entered in the public records, the honest testator, who had scarcely recovered from a dangerous disease, was struck with apoplexy after partaking plentifully of some admirable soup. He died; and the seals were placed on all his property with all due formality. Fifteen or twenty days elapsed; the relations of the deceased assembled; the will was opened and read. Nedopeouskin was called. He appeared.

The majority of the persons composing the company knew that Fikhon had performed some services for the deceased. The deafening shouts and ironical congratulations which greeted him from the other legatees, on advancing up the hall, were tremendous.

"Mr. Landed Proprietor, gentlemen! look! look at the new bârin! upon my word! a very pretty bârin!"

"Yes, yes," began a miserable coiner of bad jokes

"Well, what of it? . . . The gentleman is very well! . . . do you know who he is? . . . exactly, exactly . . . he is truly . . . an heir!"

A shout of inextinguishable laughter arose.

Nedopeouskin refused to believe in his good fortune. They shewed him the clause . . . He reddened, winked, opened his mouth, twiddled with his fingers, and finished by bursting into tears. At these demonstrations, the merriment of the company was changed all at once into a deafening roar of derisive laughter. The window-panes jingled and shook as if they had been exposed to a high wind. The village bequeathed to Fikhon was inhabited only by twenty-five souls. When the opportunity offered, why should they not have a little merriment in the house of the deceased, who had now lain twenty days in consecrated ground? Only one of the legatees, a well-made, strong man, with a Grecian nose, and a pleasant expression of countenance, named M. Rostislaff Adamytch Stoppell, of St. Petersburg, did not agree with the majority: he went close up to Nedopeouskin, and, looking over his shoulder, said to him, in a careless and scornful tone—

"Tell me, my dear sir, if I am correct when I say that you lived with the late Fedor Fedorytch as a buffoon, or favourite servant?"

The St. Petersburg gentleman expressed himself in pure, elegant, and correct Russian. Nedopeouskin, his thoughts engaged elsewhere, did not hear the question of the unknown; the other legatees said nothing; the wit smiled with a complaisant air. Nedopeouskin lifted his head, and gazed around him with a vacant stare, and with his mouth wide open. The foppish M. Rostislaff Adamytch tipped the rest the wink, smiled more ironically, and followed up his advantage:

"I congratulate you, Mr. Proprietor; I congratulate

you, on my soul I do. It is true that very few people would have adopted your way of climbing to fortune; but, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, says the proverb, which means, sir, every one to his taste. Don't you agree with me?"

Every person in the company set up a sort of suppressed titter, tickled by what he had heard, and above all, with the Latin. One looked about him, another smiled; all seemed delighted. Pleased at this, Rostislaff Stoppell added—

"Will you have the goodness to tell us what merit of yours procured you this legacy, which, to say the truth, *is* a plum? Don't blush; reflect, my dear sir, that we are here, if I may say so, as one family . . . Gentlemen, will you explain to this young man that we are here as one family?"

The legatee to whom M. Stoppell addressed himself, not understanding the French words which were mixed up in the question, contented himself, in reply, by shaking his head in a vague kind of way, accompanied with a light kind of cough, which did duty for words. But another of the company, a young man, with a forehead curiously marked with yellow freckles, believing he spoke good French, said—

"Voui, voui, vous dites justesse, ann famile, ann famile, voui, voui!"

"Is it true," resumed Stoppell, "that you can walk on your hands, with your legs in the air? . . Is it?"

Nedopeouskin glanced at him with a look of despair. Keen malice played in the countenances of all the company.

"Or perhaps you can imitate to the life, the crowing of a cock?"

A loud roar of laughter broke out; but it was immediately suppressed.

"Enough," cried a creaking but imperious voice; "are you not ashamed of yourselves, to abuse and insult this poor man?"

The company looked at one another. In the doorway stood Tchertapkhanoff. As a relation of the deceased, though distant, he had been invited in a formal way to attend the meeting. During the reading of the will, he had kept himself, according to his invariable custom, in a corner, at a distance from all the company.

"Enough!" repeated he in a voice of thunder, and shaking his head fiercely.

M. Stoppell turned round quickly to that side whence the sound proceeded, and seeing a man tolerably well dressed, but with nothing remarkable either in his air or manner, said, in a low tone, to a neighbour (prudence is always a virtue)—

"Who is that man, pray?"

"Tchertapkhanoff, no great personage, I can assure you," he whispered into Stoppell's ear; who, seeing his conjectures confirmed, put on his most haughty air.

"Ah! have we then here a master of ceremonies?" said he, speaking through his nose, with his eyes half open. "Allow me to ask you where you fell from?"

Tchertapkhanoff flew at him with the velocity of a cannon ball; rage at first prevented him speaking. He then burst forth—

"Dz dz dz," he hissed . . and then vociferated in a voice of thunder, "Who am I? who am I? I am Pantelei Tchertapkhanoff, a noble, and of the oldest nobility, too, do you hear? My great-great-grandfather was at the siege of Kazan, under the Terrible* . . And you, you; I hope you're noble! eh?"

Rostislaff Adamytch grew pale (such bursts of vio-

* The Czar Ivan IV., surnamed the Terrible.

lence always tell); he recoiled, absolutely recoiled. . . It was as if a storm had suddenly burst over his head.

"Yes, I am somebody! somebody. . . Y-y-y-yes."

Tchertapkhanoff made a spring to catch Stoppell, who ran back. Several of the company put themselves in the way of the furious man.

"Bring me pistols; quick, quick, pistols; we have two muskets here . . three paces distance, or only the breadth of a pocket-handkerchief; a sword, or whatever weapon he pleases!" cried Panteleï, in a perfect storm of passion. "Or, let him ask my pardon, and this poor fellow's, also."

"Make an apology, an apology," murmured the legatees, who were trembling in every limb, to Stoppell, "he could flay you alive, you see."

"Pardon me, well! pardon me, sir; I did . . . not . . . know . . ." muttered Stoppell to Tchertapkhanoff, in a faltering tone; who, instead of stuttering in the least, said at one breath—

"Apologize also to him, to him!"

"I humbly ask your pardon," added Stoppell, addressing Nedopeouskin, who was so terrified, that he would willingly have quitted the assembly, the district, and given up entirely the village bequeathed to him.

Tchertapkhanoff's anger cooled down as if by enchantment; he went right up to Fikhon Ivanytch, took him by the hand, scowled terribly on all around, and not meeting the gaze of a single person in the company, who were almost dead with fright, walked out of the room, in the midst of a profound silence, where a minute ago stormy discussion had raged, taking with him the new lord and master of Bezcélendeeff, and of the meadows, woods, fields, and tenements belonging to that estate, clear of all debt and mortgage of any kind.

Since that memorable day, these two have never been separate, (Bezcélendeeff is about six miles from Bezsonovo). Nedopeouskin's gratitude was not long in becoming a kind of ardent devotion. Feeble, effeminate, and trivial, subject to momentary sinkings of heart and spirit, Fikhon prostrated himself in the dust before the intrepid and generous nature of Panteleï. "Is it a little thing?" thought he sometimes, "is it a little thing to look the governor in the face and speak with him—the governor of the province himself—face to face, without shutting your eyes? Ah! heaven, face to face, consider that . . . with the governor, face to face!"

Fikhon's admiration for Panteleï amounted almost to frenzy; he knew him to be true as steel, and a gentleman every inch of him—always disinterested; he imagined his hero, besides a man of extraordinary spirit, a philosopher, a man of erudition, a genius, a sun of intelligence.

Although Tchertapkhanoff's education had been of the most miserable kind, it was, to speak the truth, much superior to that of Fikhon's. Tchertapkhanoff could read Russian indifferently, French he knew little or nothing of . . . and if his Swiss tutor asked him this question—familiar to everybody's ear from the one end of the world to the other—"Parlez vous Français, Monsieur?" he answered like a man walking barefooted over iron spikes—"Je ne comprenn . . . pas . . . cé . . . dé vous parlé" . . . He knew, however, that such a man as Voltaire had once lived, that he was a very spirited writer, and that Frederick the Great, who had not the least genius in him, was nevertheless a man very fond of fomenting wars, which generally terminated in his favour. As regards great Russians, he esteemed Derjâvin and loved Marlinski with such

devotion, that he had called his best dog Ammalatt Bek.*

Some days after my first meeting with the friends, I went to pay a visit to Panteleï Eréméitch at Bezsonovo. You can see his modest dwelling from a distance, standing by itself perched upon a height nearly half a mile from the village, like a falcon suspended in air over the meadows below. Four separate buildings in an enclosure composed the abode of Tchertapkhanoff —the dwelling-house, the stable, the coach-house, and the bath-house. These four houses stood out boldly against the sky on the little sandy hill on which they were built; but you could see neither ditch, palisade, hedge, carriage gates, nor barriers, that gave the slightest indication of a baronial residence.

On my arrival, I found near an out-house—an appurtenance of the stable, half-a-dozen lean dogs with coarse rough coats, engaged in gnawing the carcass of a horse—Orbassan, I suppose. One of them lifted his bloody muzzle into the air, as if he intended to salute me with a volley of barks; but, on reflection, he changed his mind, and went on with his task. Near this group stood a boy about seventeen years of age, with a yellow bloated face and bare feet, habited in the Cossack costume; he regarded the dogs of which he was in charge, with a dictatorial air, and from time to time repressed, by the help of a long whip, the snappish voracity of the most excited of the pack.

"Is your master at home?" I asked.

"Perhaps he is, and perhaps not," replied the boy. "Knock; they'll answer."

* The hero of a poem of Marlinski—the pseudonym of the famous Bestoujeff, who died in the Caucasus after having passed the best part of his life in Siberia, on account of the liberality of his opinions.

I leaped from my drochka, and found myself in the covered porch. M. Tchertapkhanoff's house was not at all inviting to the eye; the logs of which it was built were quite black, and bulged out in the middle like the staves of a barrel; as far up as the chimney the planks were half burnt, weak, decayed with age and tottering; the small stained-glass windows looked out sickly upon the plain; and the overhanging roof was covered with moss, and eaten with worms in many places. I knocked too gently at first; no one replied.

I knocked again, and more loudly. A man's voice replied—"Who's there? come in!" I went into a large empty antechamber, and, through a door slightly ajar, I perceived Tchertapkhanoff. He was dressed in a Bucharian khalatt and wide trousers, with a red ermolzka or Greek skull-cap on his head; and seated upon a chair of an altogether antediluvian character, its legs gaping with fissures, was a poodle whose muzzle he was hitting now and then, whilst with the other hand he was gravely poising a piece of bread on the dog's nose. "Ah!" he said with dignity, and yet without troubling himself or altering his position, "delighted to see you; do me the honour of sitting beside me. You see I am engaged in teaching Vennzor."

Then raising his voice, he said, turning about, "Fikhon Ivanytch! M. Nedopeouskin! will you come here; a gentleman has been so kind as visit us—a sportsman too . . . Guess who he is?"

"I shall be with you immediately," replied Fikhon Ivanytch from the next room . . . "Hallo, Marie, fetch me my cravat."

Tchertapkhanoff looked at the dog, who was gazing up into his face, and put the bit of bread again on the point of the poodle's nose. I cast my eye round the chamber. The room in which I was—evidently the

principal one in the house—had hardly any furniture in it, except a table with movable leaves, unequally balanced upon three legs of different lengths, and four straw-bottomed chairs in a sadly dilapidated condition. The walls were whitewashed, and ornamented with blue five-cornered stars; the plaster was falling off in twenty places, and especially at the corners, which were set apart for holding fowling-pieces and pipe-stems. Between the two windows hung a mirror, its face so starred with cracks that neither the duster nor the feather-broom could with any safety be applied to it. I am quite at a loss to understand why so much respect was shown to the black filmy network which fell from the ceiling, or whether my host preserved these specimens of network to afford opportunities of studying the natural history of spiders, which were so numerous that he could have caught any number of them with his hand.

"Well!" . . . cried Tchertapkhanoff angrily, "seize it, seize it . . . Oh! you stupid beast!"

The poor animal trembled in every limb without daring to open his mouth; he sat on the chair, his tail stuck unnaturally beneath him, curling his nose, and winking; his whole appearance seeming to say—"My only desire is to know your will, my puissant lord and master!"

"Well, swallow it, won't you! seize it!"

"You have frightened him a little," I said.

"Well, let him go and run about!"

The master let his pupil go with a kick in the side. The bit of bread fell, and the poor beast, regaining the use of his feet, ran into the antechamber with his tail between his legs.

The door of the adjoining room was softly opened, and M. Nedopeouskin appeared, bowing and smiling in

the most agreeable and polite manner. I rose and bade him good day.

"Don't trouble yourself, I pray you," said he.

We sat down near each other. Tchertapkhanoff went into an adjoining chamber.

"Have you been long in our Palestine?" said Nedopeouskin in a mellow voice, after coughing gracefully into the hollow of his hand. He held the tips of his fingers to his upper lip.

"Little more than a month."

"Ah!" he said. A pause. . . . Then he added, "This is a beautiful day." . . He looked at me as if he were grateful to me for the fineness of the day. "The crops are coming up well . . it is a blessing." Another smile, another look of gratitude, another pause. He went on, "Panteleï Eréméitch had the good fortune yesterday to shoot two hares . . confound it, he had some trouble in getting within shot of them—true, I tell you . . but what hares! what hares! superb, I assure you."

"Has M. Tchertapkhanoff good dogs?"

"Capital animals!" replied M. Nedopeouskin warmly, delighted to seize the least handle for conversation; "you may say they are the best in the province." (He moved his chair.) "Ah! Panteleï Eréméitch is a man . . a man, you see . . when he wants anything done, ho! ho! he only thinks . . . or looks; the thing is done . . t-r-r-r-r! Here he comes! Ah! I'll tell you." . . .

Tchertapkhanoff re-entered the room. Nedopeouskin smiled, stopped speaking to me, and regarded his friend almost with tears of joy in his eyes, which said better than words, "Look at him! observe him! you won't see his fellow on the earth."

We all three began to talk about sporting. "Shall

I shew you my leash of hounds?" said Tchertapkhanoff to me; and without waiting for my assent, he called, "Karpa! Karpa!" A well-grown boy, in a green nankeen cafetan, with a sky-blue collar and coat-of-arm buttons, appeared at the door.

"Tell Foma to bring here Ammalatt and Saïga. . . and as they ought to be . . do you understand?"

Karpa smiled knowingly; his lips moved; he said something—I did not hear what it was—and vanished. Two minutes after, Foma appeared, with two dogs in a leash. I admired, as politeness required me, the two dull, stupid-looking creatures—(beagles, and in general all dogs who hunt by the eye and not by the scent, are incredibly stupid.) Tchertapkhanoff very graciously spat upon Ammalatt's nose, which, by the way, did not seem to afford the animal the least pleasure. Nedopeouskin patted their sides and haunches. The dogs away, the conversation was resumed.

"What!" cried Tchertapnakhoff all at once, "why is she there by herself, when we have such pleasant company here? Hallo, Marie, come here!"

A movement was heard in the neighbouring chamber, but there was no reply.

"Ma-a-a-rie!" said M. Tchertapkhanoff softly, "come, come, you silly thing, nobody will hurt you!"

The door opened softly, and a female of about twenty years of age entered—tall, of a noble figure, a blonde Bohemian countenance, with grey eyes, hair black as ebony, and teeth of a dazzling whiteness, which shone with marvellous brilliancy between her coral lips. She wore a white dress; a sky-blue shawl, fastened at the neck with a gold pin, fell from her shoulders as far as the elbows; from beneath appeared a beautiful arm, and a hand delicately small and tapering, which might well be called aristocratic. She advanced two steps into the

wkwardness and timidity of a savage, surveyed us with perfect composure. nter, how I should have wished to trans- he woman in this attitude, as she stood utiful as a Greek statue.

to introduce you to Marie, my wife, if aid my host.

e flushed; she reddened, and smiled at the I bowed with real heartfelt politeness; it d. Her little aquiline nose, her large trans- rils, the bold but delicate pencilling of her rows, her pale cheeks so beautifully round , and the whole expression of her face, betrayed ccentricity, independence, dignity, and resolu- wo ringlets of soft curls, gleaming in the light, down the back of her head.

went to a window, and sat down. I did not to increase her uneasiness, and conversed in a al way with Tchertapkhanoff. Marie half turned head towards us, and looked at me from beneath eyebrows, stealthily, wildly, and by snatches. s look—this glance of her eye had something in it the basilisk, so magically strange was it.

Nedopeouskin seated himself beside her, and whis- ered something into her ear. She smiled again. When she smiled this time, she curled slightly the sides of her nose, and raised her upper lip, which communicated to her features an expression, I will not call it leonine nor feline, nor yet seraphic, but it was beautiful, strangely beautiful to any observer.

I continued gazing stealthily at her flexile form, her high arched bust, and her short, rapid, and energetic gestures.

"Well, Marie," said Tchertapkhanoff, have you no refreshments to offer to our guest?"

"We have some preserves," she r
"Well, bring us the preserves, and
brandy. A word in your ear, Marie
also."
"Why my guitar? I won't sing."
"Why?"
"I don't care about it."
"Nonsense! you like well enough, wh
"When?" said Marie, quickly, raising h
"When any one presses you," said Tche
somewhat spitefully.
"Ah!" she said.
She went out, and returned almost im
placed upon the table the preserves, glasses, sa
a flask of brandy, and then seated herself at
dow. Her face still bore traces of a frown,
gloom upon her eyebrows indicated strong inwar
tion. "Now," thought I, "there will be a scen
A sort of uneasiness kept us all silent. Con
tion became insupportable. Nedopeouskin was
melancholy, his smile was constrained and awkw
his eyes seemed starting out of his head; for my
I had half a mind to leave ... Marie all at o
rose, threw open the window with both hands, thru
her head out, and cried in a loud tone to a woman wh
was passing, "Axinia!" The woman startled, gave
kind of jump, tottered when turning herself, and fell
heavily to the ground. Marie threw herself back in her
seat, and laughed loudly at the mischief she had occa-
sioned; Tchertapkhanoff laughed also, enlivened by the
incident, and seeing the astonishing effect it had produced
on the sensitive Nedopeouskin.
The gloom was happily dissipated by this stroke of
humour.
In half an hour, no one would have known us for
the same people; we d together joyfully, like

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